NATION

SC calls Yamuna Board meeting on water scarcity

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BUSINESS

Public sector units' stocks rally over 12 per cent

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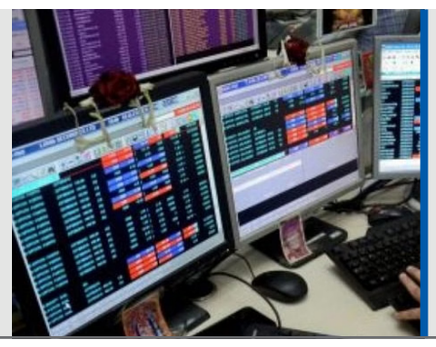

SPORTS

Bopanna-Ebden pair moves to 2nd round

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PM eyes hat-trick, Oppn hopes for rebound

If BJP wins, Modi will equal Nehru's record of leading his party to three straight victories

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi eyes a record-equalling third straight term in power amid the INDIA bloc's hope of springing a surprise as the counting of votes for the Lok Sabha election is set for Tuesday. This brings an end to a marathon polling exercise stretching over 80 days.

Most experts have long the BJP-led NDA as the favourite in the polls.

Exit polls have been, however, unanimous in their prediction that the NDA is closer to realising Modi's ambitious target of "400 paar" for his alliance than the INDIA bloc is to crossing even the 180 mark.

In the run-up to the counting, the campaign acrimony between the two battling camps has spilled over into the post-poll trading of accusations after the exit polls predicted a massive win for the incumbent alliance, a forecast summarily dismissed by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi as "Modi media poll".

INDIA bloc leaders, who have been raising doubts over the electronic voting machines (EVMs), have accused Modi of sending a signal to the bureaucracy through these "fantasy" exit polls and marched to EC, urging the poll watchdog to follow the counting guidelines.

The results will show if Congress has it in its organisation and leadership to challenge BJP amid its reducing footprint across the country since 2014. It has failed to get even the main opposition party status in two consecutive Lok Sabha polls.

PM Narendra Modi and Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge **PHOTO: PTI**

- Modi has already penned an article about his vision for the country, posted on X about people's support to the NDA

Its leaders, including President Mallikarjun Kharge and principal campaigner Rahul Gandhi, have claimed that their alliance will get 295 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha. Modi will equal the country's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru's record of leading his party to three straight electoral victories if the BJP retains power.

An uncertain future also hangs over the fate of the Left, besides many regional parties including TMC, BJD and YSR Congress, which are in power in West Bengal, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh respectively.

Modi has spearheaded a concerted BJP push to gain further in strength in the two eastern states, where the party surprised everyone by emerging as the powerful second force in 2019, and the exit polls have suggested that it may topple the two regional parties from the top position in these polls.

Another issue that has drawn the limelight is whether BJP will be able to emerge as a strong force in Tamil Nadu and the Left-ruled Kerala, two states where it has currently no seats but is predicted to win a few this time.

Always confident of his return to power, Modi has already penned an article about his vision for the country, posted on X about people's support to the NDA and rejection of the Opposition, and held a meeting with top officials on the "new government's agenda" for the first 100 days.

The results are also expected to spell out the people's verdict on the fate of regional stalwarts like Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray, whose parties have joined hands with the BJP and who have run an intense campaign to win over people's support for their factions. *—PTI*

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CEC slams Oppn over 'fake' narratives

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Monday said "fake" and "mischievous" narratives were spread to sway the general elections and sought proof from the Opposition to back its claim that district magistrates were influenced to vitiate the poll process.

"You cannot spread a rumour and bring everyone under a cloud of suspicion," Kumar said, citing Opposition claims on faulty electoral rolls, the efficacy of EVMs, voter turnout and the counting process.

EC had made preparations to deal with any foreign attempt to influence the poll process but these allegations have come from within the country itself, he said in an apparent dig at the opposition.

With EC facing criticism for holding elections in peak summer, the CEC said one of three big learnings from the polls was that this process should have been completed a month earlier.

Taking exception to allegations that district magistrates were being influenced, the CEC said, "Those levelling allegations should say which DM was influenced and we will punish them. They should tell us before the counting process begins." Congress leader Jairam Ramesh had claimed that Home Minister Amit Shah had been calling district magistrates and collectors and indulging in "blatant and brazen" intimidation.

Ramesh claimed that Shah had already spoken with 150 district magistrates or collectors.

The poll panel had asked the Congress leader to submit factual details by Sunday evening of the allegations that he made in a social media post recently but he wrote to the EC on Monday seeking one week's time to submit his reply. EC, however, refused to grant additional time to the Congress leader.

On the Opposition claims on postal ballots, the CEC said the postal ballot counting will be taken up first and the counting of votes registered in EVMs will begin 30 minutes later. Kumar referred to various memes doing rounds on social media, describing the Election Commission as 'laapata gentlemen', asserting that he and fellow commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Sing Sandhu were "never out" and were "always here". Social media users had targeted the Commission for allegedly being absent amid the model code violations by top leaders during campaign for the Lok Sabha elections. *—PTI*

CEC Rajiv Kumar with Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and SS Sandhu in New Delhi, on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

- CEC said the postal ballot counting will be taken up first and the counting of votes registered in EVMs will begin 30 minutes later.

Mother Diary hikes its price after Amul

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

After Amul, Mother Dairy too has announced an increase in prices of its liquid milk by Rs 2 per litre across all operating markets of the country, effective 3 June. In Delhi-NCR, the new prices for Mother Dairy milk will be Rs 68 per litre for full cream milk, Rs 56 per litre for toned milk, and Rs 50 per litre for double-toned milk. The price hike is attributed to the rising production costs over the past year. "The increase in price is to compensate the producers for increased costs, which have been on the rise for over one year," the company added. *—PTI*

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Heatwave: 20 die due to sunstroke in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR, 3 JUNE

As many as 20 people died due to sunstroke in Odisha over the last three days as the state was reeling under intense heatwave conditions, an official statement said. Since Friday, a total of 99 suspected sunstroke deaths were reported by different districts. After post-mortem and inquiry, 20 were confirmed as sunstroke deaths, while two deaths happened due to other causes, said the statement issued by the state's Special Relief Commission. An investigation is underway in the rest of the cases, it added. Prior to this, 42 suspected sunstroke deaths were reported, and of them six cases were confirmed. The deaths were mostly reported from Bolangir, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Keonjhar, Sonepur, Sundergarh and Balasore districts, officials said. Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Issuing an 'orange' alert, the IMD said heatwave conditions are very likely to prevail in Bargarh and Bolangir till Tuesday morning. *—PTI*

DELHI SIZZLES AT 44.7°C, 5 NOTCHES ABOVE NORMAL

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

After a marginal dip in the maximum temperature, the mercury again started rising as the capital recorded a high of 44.7 degrees Celsius, five notches above normal, on Monday, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).On Sunday, the city recorded a maximum temperature of 42.8 degrees Celsius and was on yellow alert, according to the IMD bulletin. In Delhi, the other weather stations recorded the following temperatures: Najafgarh 46.9 degrees Celsius, Narela 46.9 degrees Celsius, Aya Nagar 45.1 degrees Celsius, Ridge 44.9 degrees Celsius and Palam 44.8 degrees Celsius. Relative humidity oscillated between 20 per cent and 39 per cent on Monday. The maximum and minimum temperatures on Monday are likely to reach 44 and 31 degrees Celsius, respectively.

The weather office has predicted a partly cloudy sky with heatwave conditions in many places, accompanied by light rain, strong winds with speed of 25 to 35 kmph on Tuesday.

The capital will be on orange alert on Tuesday. *—PTI*

INVESTORS RICHER BY RS 12L CR

Exit polls drive market to record high in 3 years

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

After the exit polls predicted the return of the Modi government for the third straight term, benchmark Sensex and Nifty zoomed more than 3 per cent on Monday, recording their biggest single-day gain in three years and closing at lifetime highs.

Investors' wealth jumped Rs 13.78 lakh crore on Monday as the benchmark equity index Sensex hit its lifetime high after exit polls predicted a massive win for the BJP-led NDA in the Lok Sabha polls.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 2,777.58 points or 3.75 per cent to hit a record peak of 76,738.89 in early trade. The benchmark finally ended at 76,468.78, registering a sharp rally of 2,507.47 points or 3.39 per cent. Major trading platforms like Groww and Zerodha faced some glitches after the markets opened at an all-time high on Monday with exit polls out for the Lok Sabha elections. Following the huge rally in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies climbed Rs 13,78,630.4 crore to hit an all-time peak of Rs 4,25,91,511.54 crore (USD 5.13 trillion).

The NSE Nifty climbed 733.20 points or 3.25 per cent to finish at 23,263.90. During the day, it soared 808 points or 3.58 per cent to hit a fresh intra-day all-time high of 23,338.70.

PHOTO: PTI

Sensex and Nifty logged their biggest single-day gains since 1 February, 2021, when indices had jumped nearly 5 per cent after the budget presentation. Interestingly, Sensex and Nifty had spurted more than 3 per cent on 20 May, 2019, after the exit polls predicted a major win BJP-led NDA in 2019 general elections.

Among the 30 Sensex companies, NTPC and State Bank of India rallied over 9 per cent each, while Power Grid jumped nearly 9 per cent.

HCL Technologies, Sun Pharma, Asian Paints, Nestle and Infosys were the laggards. *—PTI*

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DITCH MALDIVES, VISIT INDIA: ISRAEL TO CITIZENS

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

A day after the Maldivian government decided to ban Israeli passport holders from entering the country amidst the deadly war in Gaza, the Embassy of Israel here on Monday recommended its citizens to explore some of the most scenic beaches in India.

"Since the Maldives is no longer welcoming Israelis, here are some beautiful and amazing Indian beaches where Israeli tourists are warmly welcomed and treated with utmost hospitality. Check out these recommendations from @IsraelinIndia, based on the places visited by our diplomats," the embassy posted on X. In the bilingual post -- English and Hindi -- it also shared four images of pristine beaches at Lakshadweep, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Goa and Kerala. Maldives receives more than 1 million tourists each year. About 10,966 Israeli tourists visited the Maldives in 2023. Israel issued a travel warning in December urging its citizens against visiting the Maldives, citing increased anti-Israel sentiment during the war with Hamas.

Israel does not have diplomatic ties with the Muslim-majority nation after they were suspended in 1974. Israel also has advised its citizens, including those holding an additional foreign passport, to avoid travelling to the Maldives. *—PTI*

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Prevent untoward rain incidents: DKS

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Monday said the India Meteorology Department has predicted heavy rains in Bengaluru in the next 24 hours and that he has given directions to officials to work as a team to avert any untoward incident.

He directed the officials to evacuate those residing in old, dilapidated buildings. He said the officers should ensure that there are no casualties due to rain.

He also asked officials to work in tandem with the NDRF and SDRF teams. They were also told to ensure that water from stormwater drains does not get mixed with drinking water. Speaking to reporters, Shivakumar said that the public can call the BBMP helpline number 1533 for immediate assistance during the heavy rainfall. *—Salar News*

Several trees fell after heavy rainfall on Sunday **PHOTO: SALAR**

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IN CASE OF HUNG PARLIAMENT

Ex-judges ask Prez to uphold Constitution

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Seven former High Court judges on Monday wrote an open letter to President Droupadi Murmu urging her to follow the "established democratic precedent" and invite the largest pre-poll alliance to form the government to pre-empt horse trading if the 2024 general elections lead to a hung Parliament.

The retired judges also urged Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and the chief election commissioner to uphold the Constitution by ensuring a smooth transition of power, if the present ruling dispensation loses people's mandate.

President Droupadi Murmu and CJI DY Chandrachud **PHOTO: PTI**

The open letter is signed by six former Madras High Court judges GM Akbar Ali, Aruna Jagadeesan, D Hariparanthaman, PR Shivakumar, CT Selvam, S Vimala and former judge of Patna High Court Anjana Prakash. They said there was "genuine concern" that if the present ruling dispensation loses people's mandate, the transition of power may not be smooth and there could be a constitutional crisis.

Concurring with the 25 May open statement of Constitutional Conduct Group (CCG) of former civil servants, the former judge urged the CJI and the CEC to uphold the Constitution in such an eventuality and ensure smooth transition of power. It said the Election Commission's refusal to disclose the exact number of votes cast in each booth of every constituency, along with the minimal action taken against hate speech targeting minorities and opposition parties by senior leaders of the ruling party, are major concerns. The letter said Supreme Court must defend and protect the Constitution and democracy, and it should be ready to take "proactive action to prevent any catastrophe". *—PTI*

SC junks YSRCP plea over EC's ballot rules

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a plea filed by the YSR Congress Party challenging the Election Commission's decision to relax the postal ballot norms for Andhra Pradesh.

The party had assailed the order of the high court by which its petition was dismissed with liberty to raise the contentions through an election petition.

A vacation bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and Sandeep Mehta said in the facts and circumstances of the case, the court was not inclined to interfere with the 1 June order of the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

YSRCP had challenged the EC's 30 May circular which relaxed the norms of the attestation of postal ballots for Andhra Pradesh on the grounds that it was discriminatory to the state. During the hearing, senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi and advocate Mahfooz Nazki, appearing for the YSRCP said that EC has changed the rules midway through the elections and that the norms will be different for other states including the neighbouring Telangana.

Singhvi said the procedure governing casting/verification and counting of postal ballots is envisaged under Conduct of Election Rules 1961 and the instructions dated 19 July, 2023 issued by the Election Commission of India (ECI). He said in terms of Rule 27F of the Conduct of Election Rules, the declaration in Form 13A is to be signed in the presence of an authorised officer, who also has to attest to the said signature. *—PTI*

PHOTO: SALAR

Kodagu police conducts mock flood rescue drill

MADIKERI, 3 JUNE

With predictions hinting at a possible flood similar to the devastating one in 2018, the Kodagu police are taking proactive measures to ensure the safety of the residents. The Kodagu district police conducted a comprehensive rescue exercise at the Harangi Reservoir in Kushalanagar taluk, aimed at preparing for potential floods. A team of 60 police officers, led by Superintendent of Police K Ramarajan and Additional Superintendent of Police Sundarraj, participated in the drill. Four specialised teams, each consisting of 15 police officers, have been established. The current training, conducted in water up to 80 feet deep, is aimed at building the confidence and skills needed for effective flood rescue operations. The training encompasses a variety of skills, with SP Ramarajan personally participating in the exercises. He demonstrated the rescue techniques by diving into the Harangi Reservoir and simulating the rescue of individuals from the water. SP Ramarajan emphasised the importance of the training, stating, "Our police personnel are being trained to be able to protect people by swimming in water for a distance of at least two kilometres. Although we have the support of SDRF and NDRF personnel, this training ensures that we can immediately respond to any emergency." Exercise was designed to train the police force in rescuing individuals trapped in floodwaters. Since 2018, Kodagu district has faced multiple incidents of landslides and floods, severely impacting Madikeri, Virajpet, and Kushalanagar taluks. Overflowing Cauvery River inundated at least 36 villages, destroying homes and claiming lives. Kodagu Police Department has been conducting regular training sessions since 2020.

—Salar News

A car is damaged after a tree falls due to rain at Mahalaxmi Layout on Monday PHOTO: PTI

Rains cause outage, leave roads in a mess

Breaks 133-year record for rainfall in June

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Power cuts and Heavy rainfall over the weekend wreaked havoc in Bengaluru, causing widespread power outages and uprooting trees across the City. Bengaluru received 111 mm rainfall on 2 June, breaking the 133-year record for the highest ever rainfall in a single day in June. The relentless downpour, on Sunday evening, triggered power cuts. Many areas faced severe power cuts for long periods of time along with water-logging

Residents struggled to work from home and manage daily chores without electricity. "The frequent power cuts today have disrupted our daily routines," said Aditi S, a resident of Koramangala. She added that repairs took nearly six to seven hours after a tree branch fell on a transformer..

Shruthi Kumar K told Salar News that from Banashankari 3rd stage faced a power cut for over eight hours on Sunday and Monday. "The City's infrastructure seems to crumble at the first sign of rain," she said.

BMTC bus stand in Silk Board is waterlogged PHOTO: SALAR

BESCOM swarmed with calls

Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (BESCOM) was inundated with calls between 2 pm and 9 pm on Sunday. They received over 17,000 calls, with a peak of over 7,000 calls between 6 pm and 7 pm. During this time, over 4,800 complaints were registered, highlighting the widespread nature of the outages. BESCOM officials assured that their teams are working round the clock to restore power and prioritize repairs.

Uprooted trees cause additional damage

The downpour also led to the uprooting of 218 trees and falling branches in 41 locations.

A total of 285 complaints were received between 4pm and 10pm. Cubbon Park and Lalbagh Botanical Garden were particularly affected, with over 25 and six large trees uprooted respectively. Officials believe recent infrastructure work may have loosened the roots of trees in Cubbon Park, contributing to the damage.

Officials said 261 electricity poles fell down, which were restored. *—Salar News*

6 SEATS IN FOCUS

Voting concludes in State for MLC elections

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The biennial elections for six seats in the Karnataka Legislative Council were held on Monday, with 78 candidates vying for positions.

All 11 candidates from the three political parties Congress, BJP and JD(S) who filed their nominations on Monday for the Karnataka Legislative Council polls are likely to get elected unopposed, sources said.

Voter turnout per cent were reported as 69.51 per cent in Karnataka North East Graduates, 78.19 per cent in Karnataka South West Graduates, 65.86 per cent in Bengaluru Graduates, 88.07 per cent in Karnataka South Teachers, 82.56 per cent in Karnataka South-West Teachers, and 95.27 per cent in Karnataka South-East Teachers.

The total electorate consists of 3.63 lakh voters in the graduates' constituencies and 70,260 voters in the teachers' constituencies.

The total electorate consists of 3.63 lakh voters in graduates' constituencies and 70,260 voters in the teachers' constituencies PHOTO: SALAR

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar from Congress voted at Kanakapura Taluk office for Bengaluru Graduate constituency election. Bengaluru Central Lok Sabha candidate Mansoor Ali Khan voted in Jayanagar. The Legislative Council from South Teachers' constituency elections reported a voter turnout of 95.27 per cent across Mysuru, Chamarajanagar, Mandya, and Hassan districts.

Chamarajanagar district stood for highest voter turnout at 92.25 percent. Hassan and Mandya districts followed with91.95 percent and 91.60 percent, respectively.

Mysuru district saw a turnout of 84.07 percent.

—Salar News

13K polling staffs placed at 29 counting centres

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Elaborate arrangements have been put in place with the deployment of more than 13,000 staff at the 29 counting centres across the State for the counting of votes on Tuesday for 28 Lok Sabha constituencies, officials said on Monday.

The first phase of polling in the 14 seats in most of the southern and coastal districts was held on 26 April and the second phase in the other 14 segments in the northern districts was held on 7 May.

Each Parliamentary Lok Sabha constituency has one counting centre each. However, in Tumakuru, counting of votes will be done in two places, so the total number of counting centres is 29.

Chief Electoral Officer of Karnataka, Manoj Kumar Meena said, "We have 28 Parlimentary Lok Sabha constituencies in Karnataka and counting of votes at the 29 counting centres in the state will begin at 8 am on Tuesday."

According to the police, in Bengaluru alone, more than 2,400 police officers have been deployed at the three counting centres in the state capital, namely Mount Carmel College, Vasantnagar (Bengaluru Central Constituency), St Joseph's Indian High School, Vithal Mallya Road (Bengaluru North Constituency) and SSMRV College, Jayanagar (Bengaluru South Constituency).

- More than 2,400 police officers have been deployed at the three counting centres in Mount Carmel College, St. Joseph's Indian High school, & SSMRV college

Appropriate arrangements have been made for counting of votes in the three Lok Sabha constituencies within the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) limits to ensure the smooth conduct of the counting of votes under tight security, they said.

Three quick response teams and a total of 516 police officers from the Civil and City Armed Reserve (CAR) wings have already been deployed for the counting day. More than 400 traffic police personnel will be stationed around counting centres to ensure smooth traffic flow.

Prohibitory orders will be in effect in Bengaluru City from 6am to midnight on Tuesday. Gatherings, victory celebrations, meetings, and programmes are banned.

Karnataka State Reserve Police (KSRP) and CAR platoons will be deployed in sensitive areas of the City.

—Salar News

CM Siddaramaih PHOTO: PTI

CM rubbishes exit polls, says will win 15-20 seats

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Chief Minister Siddaramaih on Monday concurred with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's statement terming exit polls as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's media poll. He asserted that the party will win 15-20 Lok Sabha seats out of 28 in the State.

Rahul Gandhi on Sunday dubbed the exit polls as "Modi media poll".

Exit polls on Saturday predicted that Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the BJP-led NDA expected to win a big majority. They have also predicted BJP-JD(S) alliance's sweep in Karnataka, and none of them gave the ruling Congress a double-digit figure.

"Mallikarjun Kharge (Congress President) has said that across the country INDIA bloc will win 295 seats. I support it," he added.

The then ruling Congress-JD(S) alliance had come a cropper, winning just one seat each in the 2019 Lok Sabha poll. BJP had swept the polls, winning 25 seats, and had ensured the victory of a party supported independent candidate in Mandya.

Meanwhile, Siddaramaih said he has not sought resignation of Minister B Nagendra, who is facing allegations over illegal money transfer from a state-run corporation, and any decision in this regard will be taken based on the probe report of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted to investigate it.

He also questioned BJP, asking as to who were they to fix a deadline for the government to remove Nagendra, the Minister for Scheduled Tribes Welfare, from the post.

BJP has sought a CBI probe into the alleged illegal money transfer case involving the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation Ltd, and also demanded immediate dismissal of Nagendra from the Ministry. *—PTI*

CONG SETS UP TASK FORCE ON COUNTING DAY

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

The State government has set up four special task forces to monitor the counting of votes today for the 28 Lok Sabha constituencies in Karnataka. The counting will begin at 8am, and Congress has organised these task forces on a division-wise basis to address any issues that may arise during the results.

The task forces are located in Bengaluru, Mysuru, Belagavi, and Kalaburagi. Each task force committee consists of KPCC working Presidents, Ministers, media spokespersons, and one member of KPCC legal cell. The overall leadership is provided by KPCC working president GC Chandrasekhar.

In Bengaluru, the task force member includes Manjunath Bhandari, KPCC working President, Ramalinga Reddy, State Transport Minister, and Krishna Byre Gowda, Revenue Minister.

In Mysuru, the task force is composed of Tanveer Sait, KPCC working President, Dinesh Gundu Rao, Health Minister, and K Sudhakar, Higher Education Minister. Belagavi task force features Vinay Kulkarni, KPCC working President, HK Patil, Minister, and Satish Jarkiholi, Minister.

In Kalaburagi, the task force comprises Vasanthakumar, KPCC working President, Ishwar Khandre, Minister, and Priyank Kharge, Minister. A spokesperson team has been established to address issues with the press and media as needed. This team includes BL Shankar, VR Sudarshan, PR Ramesh, Ramesh Babu, Poornima Srinivas, and Aishwarya Mahadev.

A legal experts team will assist candidates, interact with the CEO office, and take legal action if necessary. This team includes VS Ugrappa, AS Ponnanna, CS Dwarakanath, T Amarnath, Chandra Mouli, and Surya Mukundraj. The State-level team will be based in the State war room at KPCC office, while district-level teams will be stationed at District Commissioner offices. *—Salar News*

IN THE NAME OF EXORCISM

Maulv rapes girl, makes brother rape her too

CHITRADURGA, 3 JUNE

A maulvi has been arrested in Chitradurga on Monday, on charges of repeatedly raping a minor girl on the pretext of getting her rid of being possessed by evil spirits. Police said the accused Moulvi also got the victim's brother to sexually assault her as a cure.

Chitradurga Women's Police Station has registered a case in this regard and booked a Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) case against the maulvi.

According to police, the victim went to a masjid to read the Quran for three years. The accused's parent was informed that their daughter was possessed by evil spirits and that a special ritual needed to be conducted at her house. The maulvi took advantage and started to visit the girl's house for six to seven months once a week. The maulvi had brainwashed the victim's brother into believing that she was possessed by evil spirits and that she needed to be dealt with sexually.

The accused even recorded the act and he too allegedly raped her. As per the police, this went on for six months. The incident came to light when the parents took the daughter to doctor after she complained of stomach ache. *—Salar News*

Telugu film actress Hema held in rave party case

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Central Crime Branch (CCB) probing Bengaluru rave party case arrested Telugu film actress Hema following interrogation on Monday. Rave party was organised on 19 May near Electronic City.

CCB had summoned Hema to its office on Monday. Sources said she deposed before her interrogators wearing a burqa to hide her identity. As her replies were not satisfactory, she was arrested.

Meanwhile, City police arrested a drug peddler in the case. The arrested Omar Shareef, is a resident of DJ Halli. The police have seized 40 MDMA tablets from the accused. According to them, the accused was present at the rave party and had been asked to supply drugs by the organisers. The rave party was organised on the pretext of a birthday party where most of the people had come from neighbouring Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, according to CCB sources. There were a few people from Bengaluru as well, they added. Based on a tip-off, the CCB raided the location and collected the blood samples of those who attended the party.

Hema PHOTO: PTI

The blood test reports later confirmed that 86 people, including Hema, had tested positive for narcotics, police sources had said.

According to sources, a total of 103 people participated in the party. The participants included 73 men and 30 women. Police seized MDMA (Ecstacy) pills, MDMA crystals, hydro cannabis, cocaine, high-end cars, DJ equipment including sound and lighting worth Rs 1.5 crore during the raid. *—Salar News*

WOMAN DIES OF FOOD POISONING, 50 ILL IN MYSURU

MYSURU, 3 JUNE

An elderly woman, Shivamma, 65, succumbed to food poisoning after consuming food during a housewarming ceremony in Marballi village, Mysuru taluk.

At least 50 more villagers experienced vomiting and diarrhoea. The event took place on 31 May, where at least 300 people participated and had lunch. Despite prior instructions from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to be vigilant, the health department has been criticised for its delayed response. This incident follows a recent case in Siddaramaiah's constituency where contaminated water caused one death. In the earlier incident, the contamination was traced to underground drainage water mixing with the village's water supply.

As food poisoning incident is in the peak in the taluk, MLA GT Deve Gowda visited the hospitals to check on the affected individual's health. Villagers have directly accused local officials of negligence and mismanagement.

—Salar News

NEW ACADEMIC YEAR

Kathakali artists welcome students of RV Group of Insititute, Bengaluru, on the first day of school after Summer holidays PHOTO: SALAR

IN VARTHUR

Road rage: Biker attacks citizen's car

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

A marketing professional's car was allegedly damaged by a motorist while he was driving on Vibgyor High School Road in Varthur, police said on Monday.

The incident was captured by a dashboard camera installed on the car, they said, and added that they were looking for the motorist to find out the reason behind the attack.

In a series of posts on 'X', the marketing professional Deepak Jain narrated his ordeal and shared the footage of the attack, which left him traumatised.

On Saturday, at 11.39 am, a grey Ola scooter bearing Karnataka registration number randomly overtook his car from the left side. Initially, he did not find anything suspicious but a few hundred meters away, he realised he was being followed by the alleged motorist, who started shouting and honking him to stop.

A motorist picks up coconut shell to attack PHOTO: X/@DJAIN1989

The motorist then parked his scooter in front of the car.

"In a fit of rage, the motorist picked up a tender coconut shell from the road. His face is visible as he approached my car to attack with the coconut shell. At 11.40 am, he smashed my right-side car window and forced me to open it. He then broke the right ORVM (outer rear view mirror), continuing to yell aggressively....smashed the window multiple times, and threw the shell on the car's back glass as I tried to escape from the frightening situation and drive away," Jain claimed.

A case was registered at Varthur police station and efforts are being made to nab the motorist, a police official said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Calcutta HC grants interim protection to 2 BJP candidates

KOLKATA, 3 JUNE

The Calcutta High Court on Monday granted interim protection to BJP's Lok Sabha poll candidates Rekha Patra and Pranat Tudu in connection with police cases lodged against them. The two BJP candidates had moved the high court, alleging that false police cases were lodged against them in order to hinder their presence during the counting process of the Lok Sabha elections on Tuesday. Justice Amrita Sinha directed that police will not take any action against BJP's Basirhat candidate Rekha Patra till 5 July in connection with a case lodged against her in North 24 Parganas district. Her petition will again be heard by the court on 19 June. The court said it was granting the protection because the petitioner is a contesting candidate. *—PTI*

Himachal Assembly Speaker accepts 3 MLAs' resignations

SHIMLA, 3 JUNE

Himachal Pradesh Assembly Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania has accepted the resignation of the three independent legislators. "They gave their resignations on 22 March, 2024. I have accepted those. Now they seize to be the members of the 14th Assembly. That will be notified and published in the gazette and the information will be sent to the Election Commission of India. The matter under anti-defection law on the petition of parallel proceedings on the petition of Jagat Singh is listed but the result of both would be the same if I accept their resignation or take action under violation of anti-defection Law," Pathania said. "I have not taken any harsh decisions and have decided to accept their resignations as per their wish." Pathania added. *—ANI*

SC to hear Sisodia's bail plea today

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Manish Sisodia has moved Supreme Court challenging the Delhi High Court's verdict dismissing his bail pleas in cases lodged by the ED and CBI in connection with the alleged liquor policy scam. As per the cause list uploaded on the apex court website, a vacation bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and Sandeep Mehta is scheduled to hear Sisodia's pleas on Tuesday. The High Court had on 21 May dismissed his bail applications in separate cases lodged by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in connection with the alleged liquor scam. *—PTI*

Won't vote until demands are met: R'than villagers

AJMER, 3 JUNE

Amid the scorching heat and rising mercury in Rajasthan, the residents of Balwanta village in Ajmer are facing a severe water crisis and even after boycotting the general elections this year, the villagers say that they continue to grapple with water shortage. Indu, a resident said, "It has been 20 years and we have no water connection in the village... We have complained so many times hoping for a timely resolution but no one has come. After every five years, they say that water will come but that didn't happen till now." She further said, "We will not vote for anyone till we get water in our village, be it Sarpanch or any other leader." Sapna Gujjar, a resident said, "It's been so many years that women come here to get water and stand in queues. We are not getting marriage prospects because of this issue." *—ANI*

Modi asks citizens to dedicate 25 years of life to 'Viksit Bharat'

Free society of professional pessimists: PM

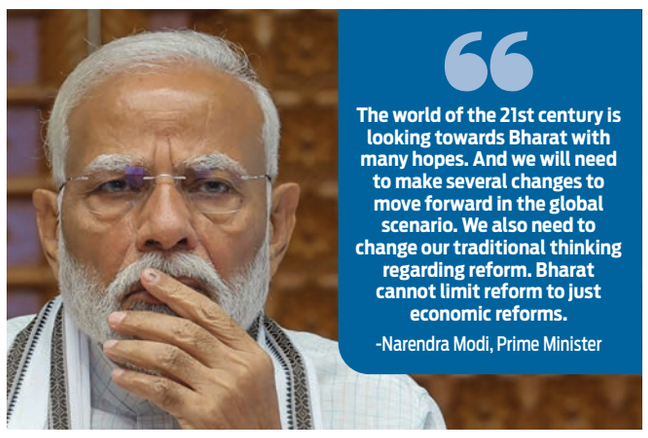
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called for the nation to "reassess outdated thinking and beliefs" and free "our society from the pressure of professional pessimists", asserting that the foundation for a "Viksit Bharat" must be laid in the 25 years in the run up to the centenary of India's independence.

"The world of the 21st century is looking towards Bharat with many hopes. And we will need to make several changes to move forward in the global scenario. We also need to change our traditional thinking regarding reform. Bharat cannot limit reform to just economic reforms," he said in an article which he had penned on 1 June on his flight to Delhi from Kanyakumari.

He had reached Kanyakumari on 30 May on a spiritual sojourn after the Lok Sabha polls campaign ended.

Modi called upon people to move forward in every aspect of life towards the direction of reform.



> The world of the 21st century is looking towards Bharat with many hopes. And we will need to make several changes to move forward in the global scenario. We also need to change our traditional thinking regarding reform. Bharat cannot limit reform to just economic reforms.
>
> -Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had reached Kanyakumari on 30 May on a spiritual sojourn after the Lok Sabha polls campaign ended *PHOTO: PTI*

In the write-up, which appeared in many newspapers on Monday, Modi said India's reforms should also align with the aspirations of a 'Viksit Bharat' (developed India) by 2047, stating that reform can never be a unidimensional process for any country.

In a clear elucidation of his government's agenda if it is re-elected, he said, "We must make excellence the fundamental principle to make our country a 'Viksit Bharat'. We need to work quickly in all four directions: Speed, Scale, Scope, and Standards. Alongside manufacturing, we must also focus on quality and adhere to the mantra of 'zero defect-zero effect'."

—PTI

Hopeful results are complete opposite to exit polls, says Sonia

Rahul dubs exit polls 'Modi media poll'

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Congress leader Sonia Gandhi on Monday said her party is very hopeful that the results of the Lok Sabha elections will be totally opposite to what has been shown in the exit polls.

"We have to wait, just wait and see," Sonia Gandhi told PTI when asked about her expectations from the results scheduled to be announced on Tuesday.

"We are very hopeful that our results are completely opposite to what the exit polls are showing," Congress parliamentary party chief added.

Sonia Gandhi made the remarks after attending an event held at the DMK office here. She paid tributes to DMK stalwart M Karunanidhi on his 100th birth anniversary.

Most exit polls have predicted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with BJP-led NDA expected to win a big majority in the Lok Sabha polls.

Congress and other INDIA bloc parties have trashed the exit polls, claiming that these surveys were a work of "fantasy" and asserting that the Opposition alliance will form the next government.

"This is not called an exit poll but its name is 'Modi media poll'. This is Modi ji's poll, it is his fantasy poll," former Congress president Rahul Gandhi had said on Sunday.

Congress leaders have said that INDIA bloc will win 295 seats and form the government.

Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said the exit polls, which have predicted a third term for the BJP at the Centre, do not reflect the pulse of the people accurately.

—PTI

> We have to wait, just wait and see. We are very hopeful that our results are completely opposite to what the exit polls are showing.
>
> -Sonia Gandhi, Congress leader

Congress leaders have said that INDIA bloc will win 295 seats and form the government *PHOTO: PTI*

Uddhav will join BJP in 15 days after results: Ravi

AMRAVATI, 3 JUNE

Amravati MLA Ravi Rana has claimed Shiv Sena (UBT) head and former Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray will join the Modi government in 15 days after the Lok Sabha election results come out on Tuesday.

Ravi's wife Navneet Rana, the sitting MP from Amravati, contested the Lok Sabha poll from the seat this time on the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's ticket.

In 2019, Navneet won the Lok Sabha poll from Amravati as an independent candidate.

Speaking to reporters here on Sunday, the MLA from Badnera in Amravati district said he knows the way Thackeray and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut have been speaking about Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"I can confidently say that 15 days after Modi ji becomes the Prime Minister again, Uddhav Thackeray will be seen in the Modi government and with Modi ji, because the coming era is of Modi ji and Uddhav Thackeray knows it," Ravi Rana claimed.

Leaders of the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the state should keep blood pressure medicines and doctors with them as many of them will fall sick on 4 June, the day of vote counting, the Yuva Swabhiman Party MLA said.

The MVA comprises the Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP).

The legislator expressed confidence that his wife Navneet Rana will win the Amravati Lok Sabha seat by a margin of more than two lakh votes. *—PTI*

SKM urges SDF leaders not to flee Sikkim fearing persecution

GANGTOK, 3 JUNE

After social media posts claimed that demoralised SDF leaders and workers were fleeing Sikkim following Assembly poll defeat, fearing attacks by ruling party cadre in post-poll violence, the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) on Monday urged them to stay back, promising peace and security for all.

SKM bagged 31 of the 32 assembly seats, the results of which were declared on Sunday. The SDF managed to win only one seat and even its party supremo and five-term former chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling lost both the seats he contested.

"Dear esteemed leaders and supporters of the SDF party, we have come to learn that many of you have left Sikkim fearing potential attacks. We wish to emphasise that the SKM, once a victim of such violence, deeply understands the pain caused by these heinous acts. Our ethos strongly stands against indulging in any form of violence," SKM spokesperson Jacob Khaling said in a statement.

He said Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang has strictly instructed all party workers to abstain from any anti-social activities in Sikkim.

Tamang on Monday called on Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya and submitted a resolution passed by newly-elected MLAs of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) electing him as their legislature party leader to stake claim to form the next government, an official said. *—PTI*

Sikkim CM-designate Prem Singh Tamang accepts greetings from people after winning state Assembly election, in Gangtok *PHOTO: PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Arunachal CM lauds former OSD after BJP's win

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

After a one-sided win in Arunachal Pradesh Assembly elections, Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Monday lauded his former Officer on Special Duty (OSD) over his detailed analysis of the reasons people voted for the BJP.

In a post on X, CM Khandu said, "Guided by the dynamic leadership of PM Narendra Modi Ji, we ensured last mile delivery of government developmental schemes in the State."

Aaditya Tiwari, a former OSD to Arunachal Pradesh CM wrote an article in Indian Express where he mentioned some reasons behind BJP's win in the state.

He emphasised that PM Modi has made more visits to the Northeast as compared to other PMs. "We have come a long way from the days when a Union minister visiting Guwahati would make headlines across Northeast India to such visits becoming routine. PM Modi has made more visits to the Northeast than all his predecessors cumulatively. A region that is culturally as well as strategically important for India still largely remains out of the popular media narrative but has remained a priority for the "double engine" BJP government," the article read. *—ANI*

JD(U) leader murdered in Bihar

NALANDA, 3 JUNE

A JD(U) leader was allegedly murdered in Bihar's Nalanda district in the early hours of Monday, police said.

The incident happened in Maua village in the Parwalpur police station area around 4.30 am when Anil Kumar, 62, had gone out for morning walk, they said.

He was a polling agent of the JD(U) when elections happened in the area on 1 June, they added.

Armed men, who are yet to be identified, first beat him up and then stabbed him, police said.

> A clash happened between supporters of JD(U) and Opposition in the village on the day of the polling, police said. Several incidents of post-poll violence were reported

"His family took him to the nearest hospital from where he was referred to the district government hospital. He died there while undergoing treatment," District Magistrate Shashank Shubhankar said.

"Police immediately reached the spot and sent the body for the post-mortem examination. The exact cause of the incident is not known. A case has been registered and a search is on to nab the accused," he said.

A clash happened between supporters of JD(U) and Opposition in the village on the day of the polling, police said.

Several incidents of post-poll violence have been reported from various parts of the state over the last few weeks. While one person died in Saran, the convoy of BJP MP Ram Kripal Yadav was attacked in Patna. *—PTI*

Delhi excise policy case: ED says Kavitha laundered Rs 1,100 cr

New Delhi, 3 June

The Enforcement Directorate(ED) has alleged in its supplementary charge sheet filed against BRS leader K Kavitha before a court here that more than Rs 1,100 crore was laundered in the alleged Delhi excise scam. According to the ED, out of Rs 1,100 crore, Kavitha was involved in proceeds of crime (PoC) worth Rs 292.8 crore. The judge extended the custody after Kavitha was produced before the court in pursuance of its earlier order issuing a production warrant against her. The court had issued the warrants after taking cognisance of a charge sheet against the BRS leader in the case on 29 May. *—PTI*

LS POLLS SAW RECORD NUMBER OF CANDIDATES

PHOTO: FREEPIK

CANDIDATES IN NUMBERS

- 8,360 total candidates
- 16% from national parties
- 6% regional parties
- 47% Independents
- Highest number of candidates since 1996
- In 1996 there were 13,952 candidates
- Karur in Tamil Nadu has highest number of candidates at 54
- Ladakh and Nagaland the lowest at 3

543 Constituencies

A LOOK AT THE PARTIES

744 Parties

6 National parties

BSP, BJP, Congress, CPI (M), AAP, NPP

NATIONAL PARTY CANDIDATES

BSP:	488
BJP:	441
Congress:	328
CPI(M):	52
AAP:	22
NPP:	3

REGIONAL PARTY CANDIDATES

SP:	71
TC:	48
AIADMK:	36
CPI:	30
YSRCP:	25
RJD:	24
DMK:	22

RE-CONTESTS IN FOCUS

327 MPs are contesting again

34 MPs are re-contesting, fighting on a different party's ticket

53 Current ministers contesting in elections

RESEARCH: ZUHA KHAN

YSRCP MLA Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy had barged into the polling station and broke VVPAT and EVM machines on 13 May *SCREENGRAB*

YSRCP MLA who broke EVM barred from booth

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Supreme Court on Monday barred YSR Congress Party MLA Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy, who allegedly smashed an EVM at a polling station, from entering the vote counting station of the Macherla Assembly constituency on 4 June.

A vacation bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and Sandeep Mehta saw the video of the 13 May incident and termed the anticipatory bail granted to Reddy "sheer mockery of justice system".

"Are we being made fun of? This is a sheer joke. How can so many enter a polling booth?"

It asked the Andhra Pradesh High Court to decide the petition related to the cases against Reddy listed for hearing on 6 June without being influenced by the interim protection granted to him on 28 May.

Reddy, the Macherla Assembly constituency candidate of the ruling YSRCP, allegedly barged into the polling station with his supporters and broke VVPAT and EVM machines. *—PTI*

J&K: 2 terrorists killed in Pulwama encounter

SRINAGAR, 3 JUNE

Two militants were killed in an encounter with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district on Monday, police said. Security forces launched a cordon and search operation in the Nihama area of the south Kashmir district after receiving specific input about the presence of terrorists there, a police official said. The search operation turned into an encounter after the militants fired on a search party of the forces, who then fired back, the official said. Inspector General of Police, Kashmir, VK Birdhi told PTI that two militants were killed in the exchange of firing.The identity and group affiliation of the slain terrorists was being ascertained, he added.*—PTI*

Lightning kills four in Odisha's Ganjam

BERHAMPUR, 3 JUNE

Four people were killed in lightning strikes in separate places in Odisha's Ganjam district, a police officer said on Monday.The deceased were identified as Sanyashi Sahu, Lambodar Panigrahy and Sanjay Gouda of Ganjam district and Dugun Pradhan of Khurda district, the officer said. Sahu and Pradhan, who were selling toys at Pattapur had taken shelter near a tree in Pattapur during thunderstorm and rainfall when lightning struck them on Sunday."We found them unconscious and rushed them to hospital at Digapahandi, where the doctors declared them dead," said Ajay Kumar Swain, inspector in charge, Pattapur police station. Sandhyarani Singh, inspector in charge, Badagarh police station said lightning struck Panigrahy on Sunday. He was rushed to Badagarh hospital, where doctors declared him dead, she said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: AGENCIES

Thief falls asleeps while on the 'job', gets arrested

LUCKNOW, 3 JUNE

In a bizarre turn of events, a thief who broke into a doctor's residence in Lucknow, dozed off due to extreme intoxication.When he woke up the following morning, he was shocked to find policemen around.The incident was reported in Sector-20 of Indira Nagar, within the jurisdiction of the Ghazipur police station. Neighbours became suspicious of finding Pandey's door ajar in the morning. They peeped in to see the house ransacked, with items strewn around. The Ghazipur police were called in and the cops found the thief, identified as Kapil, sleeping. They arrested him and booked him under IPC section 379 A for theft.

—IANS

32 monkeys drown in well in bid to quench thirst

MEDININAGAR, 3 JUNE

As many as 32 wild monkeys were suspected to have drowned in an irrigation well in Jharkhand's Palamu district in a bid to quench their thirst, a forest official said on Monday. It took place in Sorath village in Panki block and the corpses were found on Sunday, but officials were yet to ascertain the exact date of the incident. "32 wild monkeys were found dead in an irrigation well in Sorath... the corpses were fished out," Medininagar Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Kumar Ashish told PTI. The entire area is reeling under heatwave conditions, with temperatures hovering around 44-45 degrees Celsius."Sources of water in the area have almost dried up... wild animals are coming to villages in search of water... these monkeys apparently drowned in a bid to quench their thirst," Ashish said. *—PTI*

SC calls Yamuna Board meeting on water scarcity

Delhi has moved SC asking Haryana to release surplus water

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

As Delhi grapples with water crisis amid the unrelenting summer heat, the Supreme Court on Monday ordered an emergent meeting of the Upper Yamuna River Board (UYRB) on June 5 to address the issue. "Why can't there be a joint meeting of all the stakeholders?" a vacation bench of Justices PK Mishra and KV Viswanathan asked at the outset.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and the Haryana government, said the issue was already being considered by the UYRB where all stakeholder states including Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi are parties.

"This is the question which is being considered. Himachal Pradesh is called upon by the board to provide the details as to what is the extra water or additional water if at all they have," he said.

The bench observed that as an emergency measure, the meeting of the board may be convened tomorrow to address the issue.

It noted that the advocates appearing for the Centre and the governments of Delhi, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh have agreed that a meeting of the UYRB be held.

The National Capital Delhi is grappling with water crisis amid the unrelenting summer heat. PHOTO: PTI

The bench was hearing a plea filed by the Delhi government seeking a direction to Haryana to release the surplus water provided by Himachal Pradesh to the national capital to mitigate its water crisis.

"In the course of hearing, all the parties agreed that there should be a non-adversarial approach to the problem of scarcity of water faced by the citizens of Delhi," the bench said.

It said the lawyers have "agreed that there shall be an emergent meeting of the Upper Yamuna River Board on 5 June to address the issues agitated in this petition and all other connected issues in right earnest so that the problem of scarcity of water for the citizens of Delhi shall be properly addressed".

The bench said the matter be posted for hearing on 6 June along with the minutes of the meeting of the board and the suggested steps to be taken by the stakeholders to solve the problem.

Mehta said as per the figures placed before the board, if 100 litres of water comes to Delhi, the residents get only 48.65 litres.

The plea filed by Delhi's Water Minister Atishi has made the Centre, the BJP-governed Haryana and the Congress-ruled Himachal Pradesh parties to the petition, saying that access to water is essential for survival and is one of the basic human rights."Access to water is one of the basic human rights of an individual. Not only is water essential for sustenance, but access to water also forms an essential component of the guarantee of dignity and a quality of life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution," the plea said.

"The current water crisis, which may only get worse given peak summers and ongoing water shortage, violates the right to a dignified and quality life of the people of the NCT of Delhi, who are unable to access even adequate clean drinking water," it added. *—PTI*

- The bench said the matter be posted for hearing on 6 June along with the minutes of the meeting of the board and the suggested steps to be taken by the stakeholders to solve the problem

SENSITIVE INFO LEAKED

Former Brahmos engineer gets lifer for spying for Pak

NAGPUR, 3 JUNE

The Nagpur district court on Monday handed life imprisonment to former BrahMos Aerospace Pvt Ltd engineer Nishant Agarwal under the Official Secrets Act for spying for Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI.

Agarwal will also have to undergo rigorous imprisonment (RI) for 14 years and was also fined Rs 3,000.

Additional sessions court judge MV Deshpande stated in the order that Agarwal was convicted under section 235 of the Criminal Procedure Code for an offence punishable under section 66 (f) of the IT Act and various sections of the Official Secrets Act (OSA).

"The court sentenced Agarwal to life imprisonment and RI for 14 years under the Official Secrets Act and fined him Rs 3,000," said Special Public Prosecutor Jyoti Vajani.Agarwal, employed in the technical research section of the company's missile centre in Nagpur, was arrested in a joint operation by the military intelligence and Anti-terrorism squads (ATS) of Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra in 2018.

The former BrahMos Aerospace engineer was booked under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the stringent OSA.

He had worked at the Brahmos facility for four years and was accused of leaking sensitive technical information to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

BrahMos Aerospace is a joint venture between the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the military Industrial Consortium (NPO Mashinostroyenia) of Russia.

—PTI

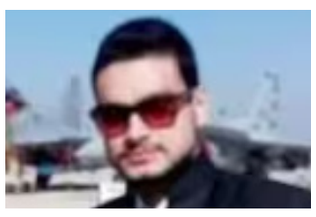


PHOTO: AGENCIES

- Agarwal will also have to undergo rigorous imprisonment (RI) for 14 years and was also fined Rs 3,000

SPECIAL COURT SAYS

'Mallya, Choksi, Nirav feld as agencies failed to act'

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

Businessmen involved in multi-million dollar scams, such as Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and Vijay Mallya, were able to flee the country because probe agencies failed to arrest them at the proper time, a special court here said recently.

Special judge MG Deshpande made the remark while hearing a plea of an accused booked under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) seeking modification in his bail condition.

The court on 29 May accepted the plea of Vyomesh Shah, an accused in a money laundering case, to drop the bail condition of getting the court's prior permission to travel abroad.

The detailed order was made available recently.

Vljay Mallya, Mehul Choksi, Nirav Modi PHOTOS: PTI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had argued that allowing Shah's application would give rise to situations like Nirav Modi, Vijay Mallya and Mehul Choksi.

Rejecting the probe agency's contention, the judge said, "I thoughtfully examined this argument and felt it necessary to note that all these persons fled because of the failure of the investigating agencies concerned in not arresting them at the proper time."

On the contrary, Shah had appeared before the court responding to the summons, secured bail, and applied many times to travel abroad, he said.

Shah's case cannot be equated with the cases of Nirav Modi, Vijay Mallya, Mehul Chokshi etc, the court held.

Diamantaire Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi are prime accused in the multi-crore PNB scam.

Modi is currently serving a prison sentence in the UK, while his uncle lives in Antigua.Mallya, currently in the UK, is accused in the over 900-crore alleged loan fraud case, being probed by the ED and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). *—PTI*

- Nirav, Mehul and Vijay, were able to flee the country because probe agencies failed to arrest

Assam rivers flow above danger mark, toll hits 18

GUWAHATI, 3 JUNE

Assam's flood situation continued to remain grim with three more fatalities reported and new areas inundated, although the number of affected people decreased marginally, an official bulletin said.

Rivers remained in spate, while affected people took shelter in relief camps in different areas, it said.

An Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) bulletin on Sunday night said 5,35,246 people in 13 districts continued to remain affected by the flood.

The number of affected people was 6,01,642 in 10 districts on Saturday.

Two deaths were reported in Cachar and one in Nagaon, taking the toll in flood and storm since May 28 to 18.

Three major rivers – Kopili, Barak and Kushiyara – continued to flow above the danger level, the ASDMA bulletin said.

The worst-hit district was Nagaon where 3,03,567 people remained affected, followed by Cachar (1,09,798) and Hojai (86,382). The CWC said more than 39,000 people displaced by flood are taking shelter in 193 relief camps in different districts. Another 82 relief distribution centres are also operational.

—PTI

Amid paper leak row, candidates move SC for NEET-UG re-examinations

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Amid news reports about question paper leak, a group of candidates have moved the Supreme Court seeking fresh NEET-UG, 2024 examination. The examination held on 5 May.

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) examination is conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) for admissions to MBBS, BDS and AYUSH and other related courses in government and private institutions across the country. The results are expected to be declared on 14 June.The plea alleged that the NEET-UG test held on 5 May was riddled with malpractices as various instances of paper leak came to the knowledge of the petitioners. *—PTI*

Stressed over exams, IAS officer's daughter kills self

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

A 27-year-old woman, daughter of Maharashtra cadre IAS officers, allegedly committed suicide by jumping off the 10th floor of a building near the Mantralaya in south Mumbai early Monday morning, police said.

Lipi, who was a law student, jumped from the building near the state secretariat at around 4am, they said.

She was immediately taken to the GT Hospital where she was declared dead, officials said.She was pursuing the LLB course in Sonipat, Haryana, and was anxious about her performance in academics, a senior official said.

A suicide note was recovered from the spot in which she purportedly stated that no one should be blamed for her death, the official said.

A case of unnatural death has been registered at the Cuffe Parade police station, officials said.

The deceased's father, Vikas Rastogi, is the principal secretary in Maharashtra's Higher and Technical Education Department. Her mother Radhika Rastogi is also a senior IAS officer serving in the state government. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

- Lipi, who was a law student, jumped from the building at 4am

Posters of Bhindranwale put up in UP, five booked

BAREILLY, 3 JUNE

Five members of a gurdwara management committee were booked after posters of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who led the Khalistan movement, and other separatists were put up in two Sikh shrines here, police said on Monday. The other posters were of Khalistani separatists Amrik Singh and General Subeg Singh.

A complaint was received on Sunday that posters of Bhindranwale and two other Khalistani separatists were put up in Model Town and Janakpuri gurdwaras. They were taken down following police intervention and an FIR was registered against five members of the Model Town Gurdwara Management Committee, Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Rahul Bhati said.

Those booked are Malik Singh Kalra, Gurdeep Singh Bagga, Harnam Singh, Rajendra Singh Jani and Hardeep Singh Nimma, police said.

Malik Singh Kalra, president of Gurdwara Shri Singh Sabha, Model Town, said that the posters were put up for 'Balidan Diwas' of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots on the directions of the Akal Takht Sahib, the supreme temporal seat of Sikhs.

PHOTO: PTI

- Malik Singh Kalra, president of Gurdwara Shri Singh Sabha, Model Town, said that the posters were put up for 'Balidan Diwas' of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots on the directions of the Akal Takht Sahib, the supreme temporal seat of Sikhs

After police objection, all posters were removed, he said.

"Whatever the police or the government may believe about Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, Amrik Singh and General Subeg Singh, for us, all three are martyrs," Kalra said.Bhidranwale, Amrik Singh and General Subeg Singh were killed in Operation Bluestar carried out by the Army in June 1984 to flush out armed militants from the Golden Temple, the holiest Sikh shrine. *—PTI*

AIR INDIA EXPRESS

Man assaults flight crew, held

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

The Mumbai police have arrested a 25-year-old man for allegedly assaulting the cabin crew onboard an Air India Express flight from Kozhikode to Bahrain and trying to open the door of the aircraft, an official said on Monday.

The accused, Abdul Musavir Nadukandee, was arrested after the flight made an emergency landing at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) here on Saturday, an official from Sahar police said.

Nadukandee, who hails from Kerala, woke up when the flight took off from Kozhikode and immediately went to the back of the aircraft, where he allegedly assaulted the cabin crew and tried to open the door of the aircraft, he said.

When the crew members managed to bring the man back to his seat, he started verbally abusing and assaulting other passengers and threatened to open the emergency door, the official said.

Fearing a security threat, the pilot made an emergency landing at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) and alerted the security officials, he said.

A case has been registered against the accused in this regard. *—PTI*

A man on Air India Express flight from Kozhikode to Bahrain was trying to open the door of the aircraft, an official said on Monday PHOTO: PTI

'Bomb' scare delays Kolkata flight by two hours

Chennai, 3 June

A Kolkata-bound IndiGo flight from here was delayed by two hours on Monday morning following a call which warned that a bomb would get exploded in that flight, officials said. Following the receipt of the call at the IndiGo Call Centre located at Thuraipakkam here, the flight was moved by authorities to an 'isolated bay' and a security check was carried out, they said.After the completion of security procedures, the flight was allowed to depart by 10.30am, officials added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

AKASA AIR FLIGHT DIVERTED OVER 'SECURITY ALERT'

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

No-frills carrier Akasa Air on Monday said its Mumbai-bound flight from Delhi was diverted to Ahmedabad after it received a "security alert".

The captain of the flight followed all required emergency procedures and landed safely at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport at 10.13am on Monday, Akasa Air said in a statement.

"Akasa Air flight QP 1719, flying from Delhi to Mumbai on 3 June, received a security alert on board. As per prescribed safety and security procedures, the plane was diverted to Ahmedabad," the airline said.

The aircraft had 186 passengers, 1 infant and six crew members onboard, it said.

The airline further said that all passengers have been deplaned, and "Akasa Air is following and supporting all safety and security protocols on ground". *—PTI*

CASTLE OR DUMPYARD?

Heaps of garbage strewn in the campus of the nearly century-old Rizwan castle in the heart of Patna, Monday, It was built by barrister and freedom fighter Hasan Imam, along the historic Fraser Road in the city
PHOTO: PTI

LS polls saw polarisation on caste & religious lines

While BJP focused on integrating various backward castes under the Hindutva fold, INDIA bloc tried to win over OBC voters by promising to conduct a caste survey if it is voted to power ***PHOTO: PTI***

As India waits with bated breath for the Lok Sabha poll results, political analysts say this year's election was "one of the most polarised" with parties using caste and religion to garner votes.

While BJP focused on integrating various backward castes under the Hindutva fold, INDIA bloc tried to win over Other Backward Caste (OBC) voters by promising to conduct a caste survey if it is voted to power, they said.

Jagdeep Chokar, the co-founder of the poll rights body Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), said this election was "one of the most polarised" he has ever witnessed.

"There was polarisation along the lines of caste, religion and region. It was not like this before. Caste has always been one of the most important mobilising factors in elections, but here, both caste and religion-based politics were at play," he told PTI.

Dr Iftekhar Ahmad Ansari, an associate professor at Aligarh Muslim University, pointed out that the realignment of castes has presented a challenge to BJP.

Bread-and-butter issues like unemployment and inflation raised by INDIA bloc and its promise to conduct a caste survey if it is voted to power has cut into the carefully crafted OBC vote bank of the BJP, he said.

Social engineering by the BJP focused on integrating various backward castes under Hindutva fold but this strategy is now under threat as the traditional vote banks realign, he added.

In Uttar Pradesh, Ansari said, Samajwadi Party has undertaken social engineering by forming 'PDA' (Pichda, Dalit, and Alpsankhyak) coalition. In Bihar, the political landscape is shaped by 'MY BAAP' (Muslim, Yadav, Bahujan, Agra, Adhi Abadi and Poor) alliance. In Maharashtra, Marathas and Muslims have united behind Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray), he added.

In states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, OBC politics remains dominant due to legacy of -reformers like Periyar.

Mandal Commission's impact was the most significant in north India, where dominant OBC castes like Yadavs and Kurmis benefitted, while Most Backward Castes (MBCs) lagged, according to Ansari.

However, Sushila Ramaswamy, a Political Science professor at Jesus and Mary College, argued that while caste and religion are significant factors, they have limited influence.

"Caste is a basic reality in the Indian context but there are limits to caste mobilisation. Identity politics across caste and religion has seen its limits. People now aspire for a good life, beyond these traditional divides," she told PTI.

Ramaswamy emphasised the shift towards aspirational politics, where economic opportunities and a better future take precedence over identity politics.

On the ground, voter sentiments reflect these complex dynamics. Radha Rani from Khair village in Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh said a caste survey must be done.

"A caste survey has to be conducted and opposition has a valid point about giving reservation to those left behind in development," she said.

Padmini Srivastava, a housewife from Aligarh, said Ram temple consecration strengthened her support for BJP.

"We want a Hindu Rashtra, so we voted for a prime minister who is unapologetic about Hinduism. Ram temple consecration strengthened my resolve to choose," she said.

Sundar Dwivedi, a Brahmin shopkeeper in SC-reserved Hathras, expressed frustration over political parties fielding outsiders.

"Why is it that every time an outsider is chosen to represent Hathras? Do political parties believe we are not capable of taking care of Hathras?" The election's outcome hinges on how effectively parties have navigated the intricate interplay between 'mandal' and 'kamandal' politics.

While caste-based considerations remain crucial, rise of temple-centric politics underscores the evolving landscape of religious mobilisation.

With hours to go for the Lok Sabha poll results, Ansari said the significance of 'mandal' versus 'kamandal' encapsulates the intricate dance of identity politics and cultural narratives in India, highlighting the enduring relevance of caste-based considerations and the emergent contours of religious mobilisation in shaping the nation's democratic discourse.

'Mandal' refers to caste-based voting blocs, a concept popularised during Mandal Commission era of the 1980s.

Conversely, 'kamandal' symbolises temple politics, a phenomenon characterised by the mobilisation of religious sentiments and issues related to the Hindu identity.

In recent years, the 'kamandal' factor has gained prominence, with the parties leveraging temple-centric narratives and agendas to appeal to Hindu voters, particularly in regions with significant religious symbolism. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salar@salar.news

SALAR سالار

It's still a man's world as only 9.6% women in fray

LS POLLS 2024

9.6 per cent of the 8,337 candidates are women ***PHOTO: PTI***

As India eagerly awaits the results of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections on Tuesday, a significant spotlight has been cast on the under-representation of women among the candidates.

According to official data, a mere 9.6 per cent of the 8,337 candidates are women.

This year marks the first general election since the passage of the women's reservation bill, which aims to reserve one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women — a bill which, despite being passed, is yet to be implemented.

Despite the landmark legislation, the representation of women in this year's election has seen only a marginal increase.

Out of the 8,337 candidates, only 797 are women, according to poll rights body Association of Democratic Reforms.

The seven phases of the elections consistently reflected this gender disparity. In the first phase, only 135 out of 1,618 candidates were women.

Similar trends followed in subsequent phases, with women candidates making up a small fraction.

In phase 2, there were 100 women out of 1,192 candidates, while phase 3 had 123 women out of 1,352 Lok Sabha nominees.

In the fourth phase, there were 170 women out of 1,710 candidates.

Phase 5 saw 82 women out of 695 contestants, phase 6 had 92 out of 866 and the final phase, phase 7, had 95 women out of 904 candidates.

- With 797 women contesting in Lok Sabha polls 2024, a steady increase is noted from previous elections: 7 per cent in 2009, 8 per cent in 2014, and 9 per cent in 2019

The number of women contesting general elections has increased from 3 per cent in 1957 to nearly 10 per cent in 2024.

The trend shows a slight upward trajectory over the past 15 years. In 2009, women constituted 7 per cent of the total candidates, which rose to 9.6 per cent in 2024, according to an analysis by think tank PRS.

With 797 women contesting in Lok Sabha polls 2024, a steady increase is noted from previous elections: 7 per cent in 2009, 8 per cent in 2014, and 9 per cent in 2019.

Among the major parties, BJP leads with 69 women out of 440 Lok Sabha nominees, constituting 16 per cent. Congress has 41 women out of 327 candidates, making up 13 per cent.

Smaller parties and regional players have fielded a higher proportion of female candidates.

Notably, Naam Tamilar Katchi has achieved equal gender representation with 50 per cent women candidates. Other parties with significant female representation include Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) and Nationalist Congress Party, each with 40 per cent women candidates.

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and Biju Janata Dal (BJD) both have 33 per cent female representation, while Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) has 29 per cent. Samajwadi Party (SP) has 20 per cent, and All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) has 25 per cent. *—PTI*

The number of women contesting general elections has increased from 3 per cent in 1957 to nearly 10 per cent in 2024 ***PHOTO: PTI***

Ancient terracotta air coolers are helping fight extreme heat

Rural areas have turned to earthen pots for their cooling needs – with the earliest known records dating back to the Harappan civilisation, more than 3,000 years ago ***PHOTO: UNEP.ORG***

The matka has ancient roots. When water fills a terracotta pot, it sinks into every pore and crevice. As the water trapped inside these pores evaporates, the process slowly draws out the latent heat from the water within. The pot cools down after losing its heat to evaporation and so the remaining water inside it cools down too. For centuries, therefore, India's rural areas have turned to earthen pots for their cooling needs – with the earliest known records dating back to the Harappan civilisation, more than 3,000 years ago.

With cooling solutions now vital to survival, terracotta's ancient application is finding new use far beyond domestic kitchens.

An ancient technology finds new life

Terracotta is Italian for "baked earth" and featured prominently in the ancient world, from Chinese and Greek pottery to Egyptian art. But in 2014, founder and principal architect of CoolAnt, part of Ant Studios near New Delhi, Monish Siripurapu, found himself turning to this ancient material with fresh eyes.

One of his clients, an electronics manufacturer, had a problem. A diesel generator on their premises was spewing so much hot air in the space between two buildings that the heat was unbearable for employees, causing headaches and nausea. Siripurapu wanted to see if terracotta, combined with new techniques, could help: "Keeping nature as the central focus in all my work, I wanted to explore emerging technologies".

The thought of the matka crossed Siripurapu's mind. "The water in the mud pot is naturally cool because when it evaporates, it sucks the heat from the pot. But what if I reversed that process? It struck me that we could cool the air around the terracotta in the same way," he says.

In Siripurapu's design, recycled water is pumped over the terracotta. As the water evaporates from inside the terracotta's pores, it cools the air around it.

Called the Beehive, around 800-900 terracotta cones were handcrafted and arranged by CoolAnt in a honeycomb design fitted around a stainless steel framework. "Stacking the cones like a beehive improves the surface area needed for effective cooling," says Siripurapu.

Since their first beehive installation, the company has created 35 such cooling towers in schools, public spaces, airports and commercial buildings across the country, from Pune to Jaipur. In addition to the beehive design, they've also experimented with designs that stack the terracotta in different shapes, and even with one that uses no water at all.

Through videos sent by clients and site visits, CoolAnt says it has recorded a drop of up to 15C (27F), using designs like their Beehive. "It did much better than we anticipated," Siripurapu says. However, that drop in temperature depends on an area's wet bulb temperatures (a measure of both heat and humidity in the atmosphere).

If it's already very humid, then there can't be such a steep drop, because the potential for evaporation is less, he notes. (Think of the sky over a city like a wet sponge – if there's already too much water, it can't absorb more.) And yet even a few degrees drop in temperature can make a crucial difference.

Buildings that breathe

Ant Studio are also far from the only architectural company deploying terracotta as a cooling solution. "In the last 100 years, modern technologies have revolutionised our air cooling. However, they have impacted our environment adversely," says Avinash Ankalge, architect and one of the co-founders of A Threshold, an architectural firm based in Bengaluru that has been experimenting with recycled terracotta to build passive cooling systems for buildings.

In a commercial building in southern Bengaluru, one of A Threshold's designs for a terracotta shade is fitted into the southern side of the building, to keep the Sun at bay.

In a farmyard 25 miles (40km) from Bengaluru, A Threshold has experimented with terracotta bricks as an alternative to regular bricks for cooling. They're cheaper and better for the environment, says Ankalge. Terracotta bricks bake at between 600 and 700C (1,112 to 1,292 F), half the temperatures required to bake regular bricks, and they've observed a temperature drop of 5-8C (9-14.4F).

Artisanal insights

In their mission to cool spaces, architectural firms are also enlisting the help of India's indigenous terracotta artisans.

One of them is Dolan Kundu Mondal, who is based in Kolkata and whose terracotta artwork has won a national award. As a child, Mondal spent her days collecting clay from the riverbank to shape into tiny dolls, animals, birds and huts. Her own home was also built with clay, but without any waterproofing, so after every monsoon, the house would be completely destroyed. "My grandmother, elder sister and I would chop bits of straw to mix in the clay and rebuild the house for us to live."

Soumen Maity, Vice President of development alternatives, a think tank based in Gurugram in northern India, says it's heartening that terracotta constructions are providing rural artisans with a livelihood – but there are some drawbacks. The additional terracotta structures on buildings – such as screens and panels – can take up a lot of space in already cramped cities. Plus the cooling efficiency can decrease over time: micro pores in the terracotta can become clogged by mineral deposits, making cleaning and meticulous maintenance essential.

—BBC News

PHOTO: BBC

China says MI6 recruited Chinese couple as spies

BEIJING, 3 JUNE

China has accused UK's Secret Intelligence Service MI6 of recruiting Chinese state employees as spies. In a post on its official WeChat channel, China's Ministry of State Security said MI6 operatives turned a Chinese man identified only by his surname Wang and his wife surnamed Zhou against Beijing. Both worked in "core confidential" departments in a Chinese state agency. The ministry alleged that MI6 started cultivating Mr Wang when he went to the UK for his studies in 2015, under a Sino-British exchange programme. The operatives took "special care" of him in the UK, such as by inviting him to dinners and tours to better "understand his interests and weaknesses" the ministry alleged. This comes just over a month after the UK charged two men with spying for China. *—BBC News*

Trump joins TikTok despite seeking to ban app as Prez

NEW YORK, 3 JUNE

Donald Trump has joined the popular video-sharing app TikTok, a platform he once tried to ban while in the White House, and posted from a UFC fight two days after he became the first former president and presumptive major party nominee in US history to be found guilty on felony charges. "It's an honour," Trump said in the TikTok video, which features footage of him waving to fans and posing for selfies at the Ultimate Fighting Championship fight in Newark, New Jersey, on Saturday night. By Sunday, Trump had amassed more than 1.1 million followers on the platform and the post had garnered more than 1 million likes and 24 million views. "We will leave no front undefended and this represents the continued outreach to a younger audience consuming pro-Trump and anti-Biden content," Trump spokesman Steven Cheung said in a statement about the campaign's decision to join the platform. *—AP*

South Africa President faces up to poor poll result

JOHANNESBURG, 3 JUNE

South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa has admitted his African National Congress (ANC) party has suffered a challenging election result, after the party lost its majority for the first time since apartheid ended 30 years ago. The ANC, once led by Nelson Mandela, won 159 seats in the 400-seat parliament in Wednesday's election, down from 230 in the previous assembly. Ramaphosa still described the results as a victory for democracy, calling on rival parties to find common ground - apparently preparing for coalition talks. The Opposition Democratic Alliance party has said it is open to coalition talks with Ramaphosa, but it opposes a number of his government's key priorities. With all the votes counted, ANC finished on 40 per cent- down from 58 per cent at the previous election, the electoral commission announced on Sunday. *—BBC News*

Christian man injured by mob in Pakistan dies

LAHORE, 3 JUNE

An elderly Christian man who was critically injured last week by a violent mob over a blasphemy allegation in Pakistan's Punjab province has died, police said on Monday. An enraged mob led by radical Islamist Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan activists on 25 May attacked Christian community members in Mujahid Colony in the Sargodha district of Punjab, some 200 km from Lahore, injuring two Christians and 10 policemen. *—PTI*

Israeli strikes in Syria kill several people

Israel says it shot down a surface-to-surface missile fired toward southern Israel

BEIRUT/ JERUSALEM, 3 JUNE

Israeli airstrikes around the Syrian city of Aleppo killed several people early on Monday, Syrian state media reported. The state-run SANA news agency gave no specific toll. It said the strikes were around the southeastern edge of Aleppo. "The aggression led to a number of martyrs and some material losses," SANA said. Israel did not immediately acknowledge the strikes and rarely does when it comes to Syria. Syria and Israel have been at war since Israel's founding in 1948. Syria's President Bashar Assad has been backed by Iran in his country's yearslong war, and Israeli strikes previously have targeted Iranian positions and equipment

The Israeli military said on Monday that the body of a presumed hostage was found in a community near the Gaza border that Hamas militants attacked on 7 October.

Dolev Yehud, 35, was thought to be among scores of hostages held in Gaza until Monday, when the military announced the discovery of his body and said he had been killed in the initial attack. US President Joe Biden said Friday that Israel has offered Hamas a three-phase cease-fire and hostage release deal, declaring it was time to end the fighting in Gaza and that Hamas is "no longer capable" of carrying out another large-scale attack on Israel.

The Israeli military says it shot down a surface-to-surface missile fired toward southern Israel from the Red Sea. There were no reports of casualties or damage in Monday's incident, which set off air raid sirens in the southernmost Israeli city of Eilat. *—AP*

Palestinians look at the destruction after an Israeli airstrike in Khan Younis, Gaza Strip on Monday PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: X/@ISRAELININDIA

MALDIVES ROW: ISRAEL ASKS CITIZENS TO VISIT INDIAN BEACHES

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

After the Maldives announced a ban on the entry of individuals holding Israeli passports into the country, the Israel Embassy in India has asked Israeli citizens to visit India and explore Indian beaches. The embassy noted that Israeli tourists are warmly welcomed in India.

The Israel Embassy in India also recommended some of the Indian places which include Goa, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep and Kerala. The post included pictures of beaches in Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa and Kerala. *—ANI*

S Korea to nullify peace deal with North over balloons

SEOUL, 3 JUNE

- Over several days, North Korea 1,000 balloons to drop trash and manure on South Korea in an angry reaction against previous South Korean civilian leafleting campaigns

South Korea announced on Monday it'll suspend a rapprochement deal with North Korea to punish it over its launches of trash-carrying balloons, even after the North said it would halt its balloon campaign.

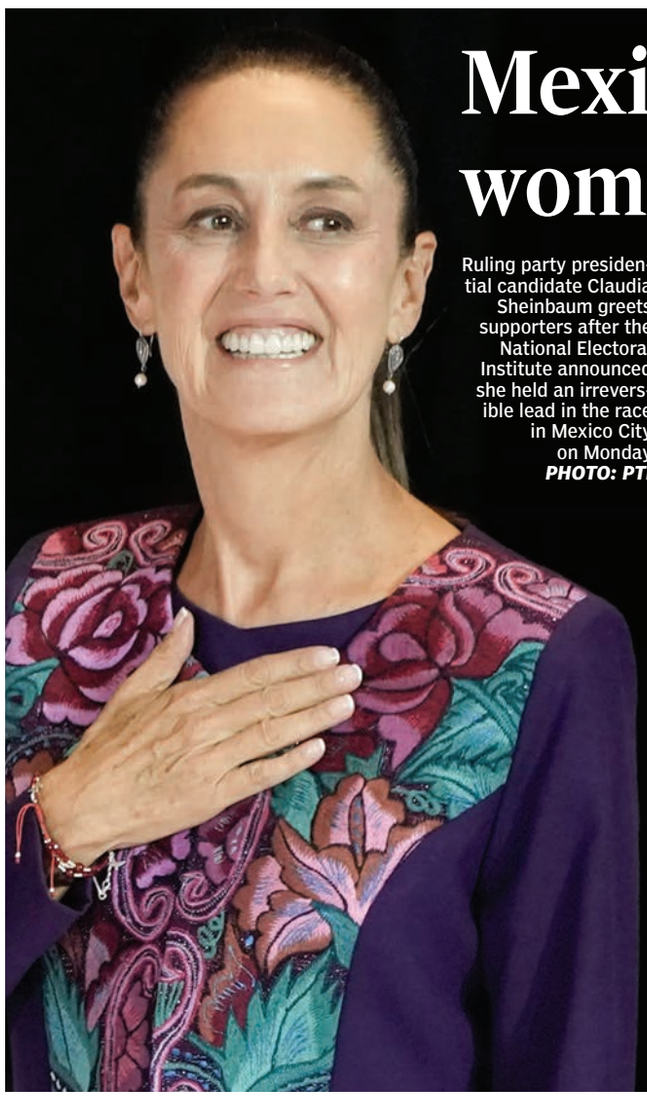
Over several days, North Korea 1,000 balloons to drop trash and manure on South Korea in an angry reaction against previous South Korean civilian leafleting campaigns.

The 2018 inter-Korean agreement aimed at easing frontline animosities, until mutual trust between the two Koreas is restored. The Security Council said the suspension would allow South Korea to resume military drills near the border with North Korea. It said a proposal on the suspension will be introduced at the Cabinet Council on Tuesday for approval.

Observers say South Korea needs the deal's suspension to restart blasting anti-Pyongyang propaganda broadcasts, K-pop songs and outside news from border loudspeakers. They say such broadcasts have previously stung in the rigidly controlled North, where most of its 26 million people are not allowed official access to foreign news.

The 2018 agreement, reached during a brief period of reconciliation between then-liberal South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, requires the Koreas to cease all hostile acts against each other, including propaganda broadcasts and leafleting campaigns.

But the accord doesn't clearly state civilian leafleting should also be banned. That has allowed South Korean activists to continue to fly balloons to drop anti-Pyongyang leaflets, USB sticks with South Korean dramas and world news, and US dollars in North Korea. *—AP*



Ruling party presidential candidate Claudia Sheinbaum greets supporters after the National Electoral Institute announced she held an irreversible lead in the race in Mexico City on Monday PHOTO: PTI

Mexico elects its first woman President

MEXICO CITY, 3 JUNE

Claudia Sheinbaum has been elected as Mexico's first woman president in a historic landslide win.

Mexico's electoral authority said results showed the 61-year-old winning between 58 per cent and 60 per cent of the vote in Sunday's election.

That gives her a lead of 30 per cent over her main rival, businesswoman Xóchitl Gálvez.

Sheinbaum will replace outgoing President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on 1 October.

Before running for President, Sheinbaum was mayor of Mexico City, one of the most influential political positions in the country and one that is seen as paving the way for the presidency.

Sheinbaum, whose Jewish maternal grandparents immigrated to Mexico from Bulgaria fleeing the Nazis, had an illustrious career as a scientist before delving into politics.

Both of her parents were scientists and Sheinbaum studied physics before going on to receive a doctorate in energy engineering.

She spent years at a renowned research lab in California studying Mexican energy consumption patterns and became an expert on climate change.

That experience and her student activism eventually earned her the position of secretary of the environment for Mexico City at the time when Obrador was mayor of the capital.

In 2018 she became the first female mayor of Mexico City, a post she held until 2023.

The election, which pitted Sheinbaum against Gálvez, has been described as a sea change for women in Mexico.

Edelmira Montiel, 87, said that she was grateful to be alive to see a woman elected to the top office.

And it was local candidates in particular who were targeted in the run-up to the vote.—*BBC News*

IN AND AROUND PAKISTAN

'China visit investment-oriented'

ISLAMABAD, 3 JUNE

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China this week and his meeting with top Chinese leaders will be focused on investments in Pakistan and stepping up the cooperation Corridor (CPEC) project, according to a senior minister.

Sharif will embark on a five-day visit to China on Tuesday at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping, during which they will draw a blueprint to strengthen bilateral ties.

This will be Sharif's first visit to China after he took over as Prime Minister for the second term after his Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party-led coalition government came to power in March.

It will be focused on government-to-government and businessmen-to-businessmen investments in energy and agriculture sectors and Special Economic Zones, the Dawn newspaper quoted Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal as saying.

Highlighting the various components of the visit, he said the prime minister would meet and have talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang and the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Zhao Leji. *—AP*

Court acquits Imran Khan in 2 vandalism cases

ISLAMABAD, 3 JUNE

A Pakistani court on Monday acquitted jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and other top leaders of his party in two cases related to vandalism during a protest march in 2022 following his arrest in an alleged corruption case.

The 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party founder has been in jail since August last year after being convicted in some of the nearly 200 cases slapped on him since his ouster in April 2022.

The district and sessions court of Islamabad acquitted Khan, former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, ex-communication minister Murad Saeed, and other PTI leaders in two cases of vandalism during the 'Haqeeqi Azaadi' march, the Express Tribune newspaper reported. In May 2022, the former cricketer-turned-politician launched a march toward Islamabad from Lahore to topple the coalition government of Shehbaz Sharif that assumed power after he was ousted as the premier following a vote of no confidence.

The rally was part of the PTI's struggle to achieve "real freedom" and deliver the nation from the "slavery" of the "US-backed" coalition government. *—PTI*

Zelenskyy in Manila to promote peace summit

MANILA, 3 JUNE

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was in the Philippines on Monday in a rare Asian trip to urge regional leaders to attend a Swiss-organised global peace summit on the war in Ukraine that he accuses Russia, with China's help, of trying to undermine.

Zelenskyy arrived unannounced and under heavy security in Manila late Sunday after speaking over the weekend at the Shangri-La defence forum in Singapore.

He had planned but failed to meet with Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr on the sidelines of that annual defence gathering and decided to fly here to personally invite Marcos to attend the summit in Switzerland, two Filipino officials told AP. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to discuss details of Zelenskyy's secretive trip to Manila.

Both leaders spoke critically of China at the defence forum in Singapore, which was attended by top defence and government officials from around the world, including from Washington and Beijing. The talks were held amid the raging wars in Gaza and Ukraine as well as growing tensions and rivalry for influence between the US and China in the Indo-Pacific region. The Chinese Foreign Ministry did not respond immediately to a request for comment on Zelenskyy's claim. China has taken what it says is a neutral position on the war, putting it at odds with Ukraine, the US and most of Europe and its trade with Russia has grown, easing the economic impact of Western sanctions. *—AP*

Blast in Pakistan claims 12 lives

ISLAMABAD, 3 JUNE

The death toll following a blast at a liquid petroleum gas cylinder filling shop in Hyderabad's Preetabad area climbed to 12 on Monday, as two more injured people succumbed to their injuries. The Karachi Hospital is now treating 11 injured people. *—ANI*

$4.5BN FRAUD

Cryptoqueen has murky links to Bulgarian underworld

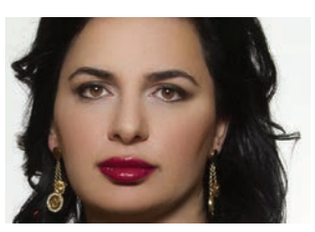
LONDON, 3 JUNE

In September 2019 a BBC podcast started reporting on the extraordinary tale of Ruja Ignatova, a Bulgarian woman wanted by the FBI after scamming investors out of $4.5bn through her fake cryptocurrency, before vanishing into thin air.

Now we have gone on her trail to try to discover her fate. BBC Eye Investigations and Panorama have looked at her close ties to a suspected Bulgarian organised crime boss and allegations she was brutally murdered. Did Ignatova enjoy the stolen billions or was she killed by the very people paid to protect her?

Oxford University graduate Ruja Ignatova was born in Bulgaria and raised in Germany, pursuing a successful career in finance before launching the cryptocurrency OneCoin in 2014. Ignatova convinced millions of people around the world to invest in OneCoin, promising to eclipse the kind of huge returns seen by early Bitcoin investors.

But in reality, Ignatova - known to many as Dr Ruja - had created a cleverly-disguised investment fraud, without the digital record that underlies legitimate cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin. As investigators from Germany and the US closed in on Ignatova in October 2017, she took an early morning Ryanair flight from Sofia to Athens, never to be seen again.



Ruja Ignatova, a Bulgarian woman wanted by the FBI PHOTO: Regtech

- Oxford University graduate Ruja Ignatova was born in Bulgaria and raised in Germany, pursuing a successful career in finance before launching the cryptocurrency OneCoin in 2014

For the past year, BBC World Service's Eye Investigations and Panorama have been trying to find out more about what happened to her, and whether she is even alive. Key to this was establishing who her inner circle was.

Richard Reinhardt, who began the investigation into OneCoin for the US Internal Revenue Service alongside the FBI, told the BBC about a key character investigators have never publicly named before. According to Reinhardt, Ms Ignatova was a far more sophisticated criminal than most people realise.

"This is like a white-collar criminal combined with a drug trafficker or mafia guy on steroids."

This theory appears to be supported by leaked Europol documents, seen by the BBC, which show that - before Ms Ignatova disappeared in 2017 - Bulgarian police had established connections between her and Taki. *—BBC News*

PHOTO: PTI

Gold down ₹200; silver tumbles ₹800

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

Gold prices slumped Rs 200 to Rs 72,450 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid fall in precious metal rates in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had ended at Rs 72,650 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver prices also tumbled Rs 800 to Rs 92,900 per kg. In the previous session, it had closed at Rs 93,700 per kg.

"Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 72,450 per 10 grams, down by Rs 200 against the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the overseas markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,320 per ounce, down USD 6 from the previous close. . It had settled at USD 30.37 per ounce in the previous session. *—PTI*

Rupee surges 28P to settle at 83.14 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

The rupee jumped to over two-month high closing level and settled with a gain of 28 paise at 83.14 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, tracking over 3 per cent surge in domestic equity benchmarks after exit poll results predicted a firm comeback of the ruling BJP-led government for the third straight term.

Forex analysts attributed the steep rise in the local unit to a number of positive factors such as strong domestic macroeconomic data, inflow of foreign funds and a weak American currency against major Asian rivals. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.09 and moved between the peak of 82.95 and the lowest level of 83.17 against the greenback during intra-day deals. *—PTI*

Welspun Corp signs ₹3,670 cr contracts with Aramco

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Homegrown Welspun Corp Ltd on Monday said its associate entity EPIC has signed multiple agreements worth SAR 1.65 billion (about Rs 3,670 crore) with Saudi Arabian Oil Co. (Aramco) for the supply of steel pipes. The duration of the contracts is 19 months, and the financial impact of the contracts will be reflected from the fourth quarter of the financial year 2024-25 to the last quarter of the financial year 2025-26, Welspun Corp said in an exchange filing. EPIC is Saudi Arabia's leading manufacturer of Helical Submerged Arc Welded (HSAW) pipes, Welspun Corp said. *—PTI*

IndiGo to host IATA annual general meeting in Delhi

DUBAI, 3 JUNE

IndiGo will host the 81st annual general meeting of the International Airport Transport Association (IATA) in Delhi in June 2025 and the meeting will be held in the country after a gap of 42 years. The decision to host the 81st IATA Annual General Meeting (AGM) in India was made at the ongoing AGM.

ATA is a grouping of more than 330 airlines, including IndiGo, Air India, SpiceJet and Vistara. The annual general meeting and the World Air Transport Summit are scheduled to be held in Delhi from 8 to 10 June, 2025. "India, becoming the third largest economy within the next few years and leading the fourth industrial revolution with the use of AI, is a nation on the move. India's rise in global aviation landscape over the last years has been nothing short of remarkable," IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers said on Monday. *—PTI*

Public sector units' stocks rally over 12 per cent

High expectations after exit polls predict Modi 3.0

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Shares of public sector enterprises as well as state-owned banks surged over 12 per cent on Monday as benchmark indices touched record highs a day after exit polls predicted a third term for the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government.

Public sector units' indices jumped to fresh peaks during intra-day, in tandem with the benchmark barometers that hit new records.

In the mid-session trade, Nifty PSU Bank Index witnessed a steep surge climbing 644.15 points or 8.72 per cent to reach an all-time high of 8,030.15, with the scrip of Bank of Baroda rising 12.53 per cent to trade at Rs 298.10.

Central Bank of India rallied 12.53 per cent to Rs 72.55, State Bank of India went up 9.78 per cent to Rs 911.55, Canara Bank rose 9.07 per cent to Rs 128.70, and Indian Overseas Bank jumped 8.35 per cent to Rs 74.65 apiece on the NSE.

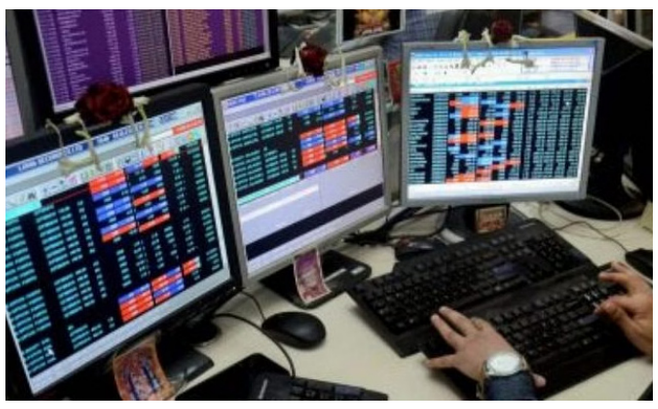
At one point, shares of Bank of Baroda and SBI hit their 52-week highs of Rs 299.70, and Rs 912, respectively. Canara Bank too hit its 52-week on the bourse.

On Saturday, most of the exit polls predicted that PM Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the BJP-led NDA expected to win a big majority in the Lok Sabha elections.

The finance ministry on Saturday said the country's Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections grew 10 per cent to Rs 1.73 lakh crore in May driven by an increase in domestic transactions, indicating a sustained economic momentum.

The government data released on Friday showed India's economy grew by 8.2 per cent in the fiscal year that ended in March, cementing the country's position as the fastest-growing major economy in the world.

The central government's fiscal deficit during 2023-24 at 5.6 per cent of the GDP was better than previous estimates of 5.8 per cent on account of higher revenue realisation and lower expenditure, according to official data released on Friday. *—PTI*



Country's GST collection grew 10% to Rs 1.73L crore PHOTO: PTI

- In the mid-session trade, Nifty PSU Bank Index witnessed a steep surge climbing 644.15 points or 8.72 per cent to reach an all-time high of 8,030.15, with the scrip of Bank of Baroda rising 12.53 per cent to trade at Rs 298.10

Adani shares rally sharply; zoom 18 pc

New Delhi, 3 June

Shares of all Adani Group companies continued their sharp rally on Monday morning, with Adani Power surging nearly 18 per cent, in line with a massive surge in the equity market. Stock of Adani Power zoomed 17.67 per cent to a record high of Rs 890.40 on BSE. Shares of Adani Total Gas soared 15.28 per cent, Adani Green Energy surged 13.49 per cent, Adani Ports rallied 11.84 per cent and Adani Energy Solutions climbed 11.23 per cent. Group's flagship firm Adani Enterprises jumped 9.71 per cent. Shares of all Adani Group surged on Friday by 14 per cent. *—PTI*

AFTER AMUL

Mother Dairy hikes milk prices by ₹2/litre

It will be available at Rs 68 per litre PHOTO: X/@MOTHERDAIRYMILK

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Mother Dairy announced Rs 2 per litre hike in milk prices in the Delhi-NCR market due to a rise in input cost over the last 15 months, on Monday.

The increase in prices of all variants of milk is effective from 3 June in Delhi-NCR as well as other markets where it has a presence.

The increase in consumer price is mainly to compensate the producers for increased production costs, which have been on the rise for over one year, it said.

In Delhi-NCR, Mother Dairy full cream milk will be available now at Rs 68 per litre, while toned and double-toned milk at Rs 56 and Rs 50 per litre, respectively.

Buffalo and cow milk prices have been increased to Rs 72 and Rs 58 per litre respectively.

Token milk (bulk vended milk) will be sold at Rs 54 per litre.

Mother Dairy, which currently sells 35 lakh litre per day of fresh milk in Delhi-NCR, said it had last revised its liquid milk prices in February 2023.

"Despite paying higher prices towards milk procurement in the last few months, the consumer prices were kept intact. Moreover, the heat stress across the country has been unprecedented and it is likely to further impact milk production," Mother Dairy said.

The company highlighted that it passes an average of around 75- 80 per cent of the sales realisation from milk towards its procurement.

This helps in ensuring the sustenance of dairy farming and the availability of quality milk.

"The surge in farm prices is only being partially passed on to the consumers, with an effective revision of 3-4 per cent, thereby securing the interests of both the milk producers and the consumers," Mother Dairy said. *—PTI*

STRONGEST IN 13 YEARS

India's manufacturing sector growth eases in May

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

India's manufacturing sector saw a slower growth rate for the second straight month in May but stayed firmly in expansion mode with global sales increasing to the greatest extent in over 13 years, a monthly survey said on Monday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell from 58.8 in April to 57.5 in May, signalling a slower but substantial improvement in the health of the sector.

In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

According to HSBC Global Economist Maitreyi Das, "The manufacturing sector remained in expansionary territory in May, albeit the pace... slowed, led by a softer rise in new orders and output."

May data showed a further upturn in Indian factory production, which stretched the current sequence of expansion to nearly three years.

The ongoing strong sales performances, combined with upbeat growth forecasts, fuelled job creation PHOTO: X/@MALIKIMRRAN786

Despite easing to a three-month low, the rate of increase remained sharp. Growth was supported by new business gains, demand strength and successful marketing efforts, the report said.

The ongoing strong sales performances, combined with upbeat growth forecasts, fuelled job creation in May, the report said.

Manufacturing employment rose to one of the greatest extents seen since data collection started in March 2005, the report said, adding that jobs growth, parallel to rising material and freight costs, underpinned a quicker increase in input costs at goods producers.

HSBC India Manufacturing PMI compiled by S&P Global, is based on responses to questionnaires sent to purchasing managers in a panel of around 400 manufacturers. *—PTI*

EMBASSY REIT TO ACQUIRE BIZZ PARK IN CHENNAI

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Embassy Office Parks REIT has completed the acquisition of a 50 lakh square feet business park in Chennai for Rs 1,185 crore as part of its strategy to expand its office assets portfolio and grow business.

The acquisition was funded through a debt of Rs 1,200 crore.

The business park has 1.4 million square feet of completed buildings, besides under-construction area of 1.6 million square feet and 2 million square feet of future development potential. This acquisition increases Bengaluru-based Embassy REIT's total portfolio to 50.5 million square feet.

Aravind Maiya, Chief Executive Officer of Embassy REIT, said the completion of this accretive acquisition facilitates the REIT's entry into Chennai, one of India's leading office markets.

Given its diverse unitholder base and 92 per cent public float, Maiya said the company would consider raising equity for defined purposes when the markets are more conducive to doing so. *—PTI*

SBI's mcap crosses ₹8Lcr, stock surge all-time high

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The market capitalisation of State Bank of India (SBI) crossed Rs 8 lakh crore mark on Monday after the bank's shares surged to a record high of Rs 907.

SBI is now the third-largest bank in India by market cap, very close to ICICI Bank which is second largest. The bank's market cap milestone was reached as shares rose over 9 per cent during a rally in the stock market, hitting an all-time high of Rs 909. Notably, SBI's shares have increased by more than 50 per cent in the last six months.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has recently posted on social media that India's banking sector has achieved a significant milestone by recording its highest-ever net profit, exceeding Rs 3 lakh crore. She also emphasised that the government will take decisive steps to further strengthen the banking sector. Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code introduced by the government has improved the financial conditions of Indian banks, with a recovery of Rs 10 lakh crore of bad loans. "Between 2014 and 2023, banks recovered more than Rs 10 lakh crores from bad loans," she said. The Nifty Bank index also surged to a record high on Monday, crossing the 50,000 mark for the first time.

PHOTO: PTI

SBI has reported a standalone net profit of Rs 20,698.35 crore, which was 24 per cent up year-on-year (Y-o-Y), on the back of higher interest income and low provisions.

State Bank of India has reported a 15.24 per cent year-over-year (YoY) credit growth at end of March 2024. *—ANI*

Toyota halts production of three models PHOTO: PTI

Toyota apologises for cheating on vehicle testing

TOKYO, 3 JUNE

Toyota Chairman Akio Toyoda apologised Monday for massive cheating on certification tests for seven vehicle models as the automaker suspended production of three of them.

The wide-ranging faulty testing at Japan's top automaker involved the use of inadequate or outdated data in collision tests, and incorrect testing of airbag inflation and rear-seat damage in crashes. Emissions tests also were found to have been falsified.

Toyota Motor Corp, based in Toyota city, central Japan, suspended production in Japan of the Corolla Fielder, Corolla Axio and Yaris Cross. The faulty tests were also found on models already discontinued.

The company said the wrongdoing does not affect the safety of the vehicles already on roads, which include the Corolla subcompact and Lexus luxury vehicles.

"We sincerely apologise," Toyoda said, bowing deeply at a news conference in Tokyo.

A Japanese government investigation into Toyota began in January. The latest problems don't pertain to Toyota's overseas production.

Also Monday, Japanese rival Mazda Motor Corp reported similar irregular certification testing, and halted production of two models, the Roadster and Mazda 2. It said incorrect engine control software was used in the tests.

Mazda, based in the south-western city of Hiroshima, also acknowledged violations on crash tests on three discontinued models. The violations don't affect the vehicles' safety.

Toyota sells more than 10 million vehicles around the world. *—PTI*

BYJU's processes employees' May salaries

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Edtech firm BYJU'S has processed employees' May salaries from the month's business collections, sources close to the company said on Monday.

Last year, the founders of the edtech firm had to pledge their house to raise debt for paying employees' salaries.

"The salaries for the month of May have been processed for BYJU'S employees and will be credited today. This milestone is particularly significant for BYJU'S as the salaries have been paid from the company's collections for the month," a source said.

PHOTO: PTI

The company in the past month also raised various debts to bear the salary expenses as it has not been able to use the USD 200 million fund raised through rights in February. "Over recent months, BYJU'S has implemented a series of strategic initiatives aimed at optimising operations and strengthening its financial health. The ability to cover salary expenses from the monthly collections underscores the positive impact of these measures," the source said. A group of four investors -- Prosus, General Atlantic, Sofina, and Peak XV -along with support from other shareholders, including Tiger and Owl Ventures, had approached the NCLT against the company management and the rights issue. Hearing in the matter before NCLT is listed on 6 June. *—PTI*

$1 TRILLION REVENUE

Global airline industry to post $30.5 B profit

DUBAI, 3 JUNE

The global airline industry is projected to report a higher net profit of USD 30.5 billion and record revenue of nearly USD 1 trillion, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), said on Monday as the sector is growing profitably after recovering from the coronavirus pandemic impact.

The number of air travellers is expected to touch five billion this year. IATA, which represents more than 330 airlines, however, said the return on invested capital is expected to be 5.7 per cent, which is 3.4 per cent lower than the average cost of capital in 2024.

Industry revenue is expected to reach an historic high of USD 996 billion while passenger revenue is projected to be 15.2 per cent higher at USD 744 billion this year.

Air travellers is expected to touch 5 billion this year PHOTO: FREEPIK

"Profitability is expected to strengthen in 2024 as revenues grow slightly faster than expenses (+9.7 per cent vs +9.4 per cent, respectively)...net profits, however, are expected to grow slightly more slowly at +11.3 per cent from USD 27.4 billion estimated for 2023 to USD 30.5 billion estimated for 2024," IATA said in a release.

The industry's expenses are expected to rise to USD 936 billion this year, which will be 9.4 per cent higher than 2023.

Fuel is expected to average USD 113.8 per barrel in 2024 translating into a total fuel bill of USD 291 billion, accounting for 31 per cent of all operating costs, according to the outlook released at the IATA annual general meeting here.

IATA's Director General Willie Walsh said the expected aggregate net profit of USD 30.5 billion in 2024 is a great achievement considering the recent deep pandemic losses.

He noted that a record five billion air travellers are expected in 2024.

"A 5.7 per cent return on invested capital is well below the cost of capital, which is over 9 per cent. And earning just USD 6.14 per passenger is an indication of just how thin our profits are, barely enough for a coffee in many parts of the world," Walsh said.

The grouping has flagged wars and supply chain issues as among the risks. *—PTI*

Esha stays in medal contention in Munich WC

MUNICH, 3 JUNE

India's Ramita Jindal gave a good account of herself but still finished sixth in women's 10m air rifle, while Esha Singh qualified in sixth place in 25m sports pistol to keep her medal hopes alive in the ISSF World Cup here on Monday. Ramita, who finished second in the Olympic Selection Trials and should be on the flight to the Summer Games in Paris, was the third one to get eliminated in the eight-shooter final. She shot two poor scores -- 9.9 and 9.8 -- in the finals, paying the price for lapse in concentration. In a battle of teenagers, 17-year-old World Championship silver medallist Huang Yuting (252.7) of China won against 16-year-old Korean Ban Hyojin (252.7) off the last shot by the slimmest of margins. *—PTI*

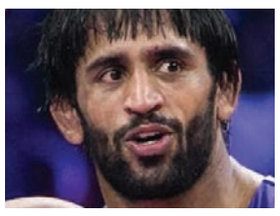


PHOTO: PTI

ADDP revokes Bajrang Punia's suspension

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

National Anti-Doping Agency's Disciplinary Panel (ADDP) on Monday revoked the provisional suspension imposed on Bajrang Punia till NADA issues a Notice of Charge to the wrestler, who had refused to provide his sample for dope test after the selection trials in March. NADA had suspended Tokyo Games bronze medallist Bajrang on 23 April and subsequently the world governing body UWW also took similar action. The trials to pick the men's national team for the Asian Olympic Qualifiers in Bishkek were held in Sonepat on 10 March and Bajrang had walked off the venue without providing his urine sample after losing a bout. Bajrang had challenged the provisional suspension through his lawyers and reiterated in his reply to ADDP that he never refused to provide sample but just demanded to know why NADA has not replied to his earlier query. *—PTI*

Elena Timina to coach Bengaluru Smashers in UTT

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

Four-time Olympian Elena Timina, who led Goa Challengers to victory last season, will guide the Bengaluru Smashers in the upcoming edition Ultimate Table Tennis. Each of the eight franchises selected both a foreign and an Indian coach at the coaches draft event on Monday. Dabang Delhi TTC and Jaipur Patriots chose Indian coaches Sachin Shetty and Somnath Ghosh, respectively. Four Indian coaches will make their UTT debut this season: Jay Modak with Ahmedabad SG Pipers, Anshuman Roy with Bengaluru Smashers, former national champion Subhajit Saha with Goa Challengers, and Subin Kumar with Chennai Lions. *—PTI*

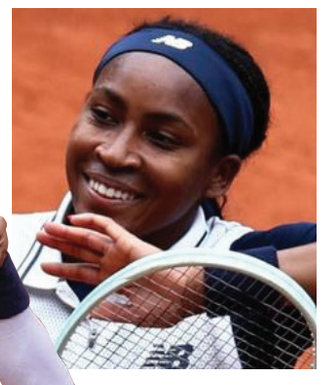
Golf: Aditi tied 26th at US Women's Open

LANCASTER, 3 JUNE

Aditi Ashok suffered two bogeys at the end of a rather difficult week at the US Women's Open as most players struggled to tame the Lancaster Country Club. She shot 71 to finish tied-26th at eight-over for the week. The 2021 US Women's Open champion Yuka Saso won the Harton S Semple trophy on a wildly-dramatic final day in Pennsylvania. The 2021 US Women's Open champion Yuka Saso started the final round three shots behind the trio of leaders. Saso four-putted for a double bogey on the par-3 sixth hole dropping her to 1-under, where she stayed until she birdied the difficult par-3 12th hole to get back to 2-under. Saso made another birdie on the par-5 13th hole to jump to 3-under, and as everyone desperately tried to make up ground, the 22-year-old moved into cruise control. *—PTI*

Swiatek, Gauff, Sabalenka sprint into QFs

French Open: It's Dimitrov vs Sinner and Alcaraz vs Tsitsipas in quarterfinals



Aryna Sabalenka, Iga Switek, Jannik Sinner, Coco Goff react during their French Open matches *PHOTO:X/@ATP*

PARIS, 3 JUNE

After the French Open marathon came the sprints.

Defending champion Iga Swiatek swept into the quarterfinals at Roland Garros in just 40 minutes after a crushing 6-0, 6-0 win against Anastasia Potapova. US Open champion Coco Gauff took only 60 minutes to rout unseeded Italian Elisabetta Cocciaretto 6-1, 6-2.

The 20-year-old American looked set for an even quicker victory when she led 5-0, but Cocciaretto fought back, getting a hearty cheer from the crowd after winning the next game.

Swiatek wound up with 48 points to just 10 for Potapova. The match ended when Potapova hit a forehand into the net on the first match point.

"I was just really focused and in the zone," Swiatek said. Their match started at around 11 am on Court Philippe Chatrier. Gauff thinks the issue needs to be addressed.

"It's a complicated thing," she said. "But I definitely think for the health and safety of the players it would be in the sport's best interest to try to avoid those matches finishing, or starting, after a certain time." Gauff says there's also a fine balance to be struck. "Obviously I don't want to complain too much about it because we are very blessed and privileged to be playing for a lot of money. There's people working real jobs under worse conditions for less money and just trying to get by," she said.

Potapova attributed her crushing defeat to the constant rain delays in recent days sapping her energy.

Swiatek remains on course for her third consecutive French Open title and fourth overall. Gauff faces No. 8-seeded Tunisian Ons Jabeur, who advanced to her second straight French Open quarterfinal after beating unseeded Dane Clara Tauson 6-4, 6-4.

In the men's draw, two-time Grand Slam title winner Carlos Alcaraz and Stefanos Tsitsipas set up a quarterfinal showdown, while No. 10 Grigor Dimitrov got to the final eight in Paris for the first time in 14 appearances and will meet No. 2 Jannik Sinner next.

Dimitrov eliminated No. 8 Hubert Hurkacz 7-6 (5), 6-4, 7-6 (3), and Australian Open champion Sinner recovered from a terrible start to beat unseeded Corentin Moutet 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-1. Sinner got broken in each of his first three service games — after holding in 41 of 43 during his first three matches — and fell behind 5-0 just 22 minutes in, before getting going. *—AP*

Carlos Alcaraz

Bopanna and Ebden raced to a 4-1 lead *PHOTO: X/@ATP*

Bopanna-Ebden pair moves to 2nd round

PARIS, 2 JUNE

Second seeds Rohan Bopanna and Matthew Ebden overcame fighting Brazilians Orlnado Luz and Marcelo Zormann in a testing three-set opening round at the French Open here on Sunday.

The Brazilians made life tough for the Australian Open champions who scraped through 7-5 4-6 6-4 in two hours and seven minutes. Entering as an eighth alternate pair, Zormann and Luz would not have hoped to feature in the tournament but a spate of withdrawals cleared their way. They threatened to upset the second seeds but Bopanna and Ebden had the experience to shift momentum at crucial stages of the match.

The second seeds raced to a 4-1 lead, riding on a double break but the Brazilian put up a great fight to reel off four straight games to make it 5-5 in the opening set. From there on, the Indo-Australian combine found a way to break Luz with Bopanna firing his returns from the baseline and Ebden supporting him with well-timed volley winners. The Australian served out the set with ease. Zormann was broken in the opening game of the second set with Ebden and Zormann locking in a intense baseline rally in which the Brazilian erred on 30-40 to hand the advantage to the seeded team. *—PTI*

Norway Chess title: Carlsen leads; Vaishali slips to third position

STAVANGER, 3 JUNE

The round six of the ongoing Norway Chess 2024 saw exciting developments on Sunday at SpareBank 1 SR-Bank in Stavanger.

In the battle of the youngsters, Alireza Firouzja and Praggnanandhaa, Firouzja maintained a steady advantage throughout the game, though Firouzja could not convert this advantage into a win and the game ended peacefully.

Meanwhile, reigning World Champion Ding Liren continued to struggle in the classical games, as he blundered a mate-in-two tactic against Magnus Carlsen in an equal position. This is Ding's fourth loss in a row. With this win, Magnus Carlsen has surpassed Hikaru Nakamura in the leader board, taking the top spot as the tournament enters its final week.

The game between Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura ended in a draw relatively quickly, Caruana had a crucial win in the Armageddon game, a "revenge" for Nakamura's win in the first Armageddon game in the first half of the tournament. This win will possibly be a massive confidence booster for Caruana after two disappointing rounds.

In the Norway Chess Women's tournament, there have been exciting developments even though all games progressed into the endgame without either side making major mistakes, a release said.

Another important matchup, between Anna Muzychuk and Lei Tingjie, which could affect the leader board, ended in a draw. vAnna Muzychuk won the Armageddon game and has thus overtaken Vaishali in the leader board by half a point. Muzychuk is now leading the tournament for the first time in the event. *—PTI*

The youngest player in the field defeats the world number-one for the first time in classical chess. *PHOTO: MARIA EMELIANOVA/CHESS.COM*

Trumpelmann, Wiese shine as Namibia win in super over

PHOTO: X/@WisdenIndia

BRIDGETOWN, 3 JUNE

Namibia's Ruben Trumpelmann became the first player to take wickets in the first two deliveries of a T20 international as his team beat Oman via the Super Over in a thrilling T20 World Cup match here.

David Wiese and skipper Gerhard Erasmus smashed 21 runs for Namibia in the one-over eliminator with Oman managing 10 from the allotted six deliveries bowled brilliantly by the seasoned Wiese. Asked to bat first, Oman were earlier bowled out for 109 in 19.4 overs at the Kensington Oval. In reply, Namibia were also stopped at the same team score with Jan Frylinck making 45 in 48 balls and Mehran Khan taking 3/7 to force a Super Over.

This was after Namibia's South Africa-born left-arm fast bowler Trumpelmann created history. The 26-year-old achieved the feat when he dismissed opener Kashyap Prajapati and Oman skipper Aqib Ilyas for golden ducks on the first two balls of the match.

Khalid Kail top-scored for Oman with 34 in 39 balls. Trumpelmann took another wicket in his second over and returned with the career-best figures of 4-21.

He trapped Kashyap Prajapati leg before wicket with an in-swinging yorker on the first ball of the match and then dismissed Ilyas with one that crushed onto the batter's toes. *—AP*

Doordarshan to telecast T20 World Cup

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Prasar Bharati on Monday announced that it will telecast the ongoing T20 World Cup, the Paris Olympics and Wimbledon on its DD Sports channel. The announcement was made by Prasar Bharati CEO Gaurav Dwivedi during an interaction with the media. Doordarshan announced that live, deferred live and highlights of Paris Olympics from 26 July to 11 August and Paris Paralympics from 28 August to 8 September will be telecast on the channel. It will also telecast India's tour of Zimbabwe from 6 to 14 July where they will play five T20Is after the T20 World Cup, it said in a statement. *—PTI*

ICC ANNOUNCES RECORD PRIZE PURSE OF $11.25M

NEW YORK, 3 JUNE

The International Cricket Council on Monday announced a record prize purse of USD 11.25 million for the 2024 T20 World Cup with the winners pocketing at least USD 2.45 million.

The runners-up will receive at least USD 1.28 million, while the losing semi-finalists walk away with USD 787,500 each.

The previous edition in 2022 had a total prize pool of USD 5.6 million with winners England receiving USD 1.6 million.

"The ninth edition of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup will see the winners of the 20-team tournament earn at least $2.45 million, the highest prize money in the history of the tournament, along with the trophy that they will lift at Kensington Oval in Barbados on 29 June," said the ICC in a statement.

The four teams that fail to make it out of the Super 8s will earn USD 382,500 each, while the teams placed ninth, 10th, 11th and 12th receive USD 247,500 each. Participants who finish 13th to 20th place will return $225,000 each.

"And every team receives an additional $31,154 for each match they win barring the semi-finals and final," the sport's governing body added. *—PTI*

FINAL CHECK BEFORE OLYMPICS

Satwik-Chirag aim for title defence at Indonesia Open

JAKARTA, 3 JUNE

Keeping the Olympics in mind, star Indian shuttlers Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will seek consistency as they gear up to defend their doubles title at the Indonesia Open Super 1000 tournament, beginning on Tuesday. The top seeded Indian pair, who are one of the favourites to win a gold at Paris Olympics, have enjoyed a good run this season with four final appearances and two wins in French Open Super 750 and Thailand Open Super 500.

Satwik and Chirag, who created history by winning India's first BWF Super 1000 title last year, will look to address the slight drop in their level this week when they begin their campaign against Man Wei Chong and Kai Wun Tee of Malaysia.

With Paris Games less than two months away, the Olympic-bound shuttlers will have just a couple of tournaments -- Australian Open and Canada Open-- to polish their skills and eliminate any lingering rust before the quadrennial extravaganza. Pressure will also be on two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu to build her confidence ahead of the Paris Games. While top stars such as An Se Young, Chen Yu Fei, Akane Yamaguchi and Carolina Marin skipped the Malaysia Open, the quartet will be vying for top honours this week.

India's top player in men's singles HS Prannoy and Lakshya Sen will also hope for a deep run into the event to receive the ideal boost in the build-up to the Paris Games.

Lakshya, who sneaked into the Olympic qualification will begin his campaign against Japan's Kanta Tsuneyama. *—PTI*

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, who are one of the favourites to win a gold iParis, have enjoyed a good run this season *PHOTO: ANI*

MBAPPÉ NOT IN FRANCE SQUAD FOR OLYMPICS

PARIS, 3 JUNE

Kylian Mbappé was left out of France's provisional squad for the Paris Olympics on Monday, though coach Thierry Henry said the list "can evolve."

The World Cup winner, who is widely expected to join Real Madrid after leaving Paris Saint-Germain as a free agent, had stated his desire to play at the Games in his home nation but was not included in Henry's initial 25-man list.

"I didn't draw a line in the hope that something would happen," Henry told a news conference.

"We don't know what's going to happen until July 3, but I have to give you a list that's real. I've put together a list that is more in the truth of the moment."

PSG's Warren Zaire-Emery and Bradley Barcola were included, as well as veteran striker Alexandre Lacazette. Unlike most international tournaments like the World Cup, European Championship and Copa America, clubs are not required to let their players compete at men's Olympic tournaments. *—AP*

End of season drama: Ocon to leave Alpine

MONTRÉAL, 3 JUNE

Esteban Ocon is to leave Alpine at the end of the year after five seasons with the French team.

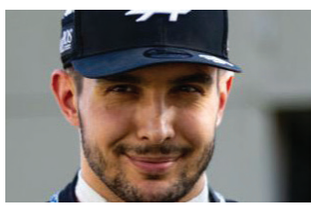
The move comes in the wake of Ocon angering team principal Bruno Famin by crashing with team-mate Pierre Gasly on the first lap of the Monaco Grand Prix. Ocon said: "We have had some great moments together, some tough moments as well, and I am grateful to everyone at the team for these memorable times."

Famin said: "We have celebrated some fantastic moments together. "We still have 16 races to complete in 2024 together with a clear objective: to continue to work tirelessly as a team to push for the best on-track results.

Famin said on French television after the Monaco race that there would be "consequences" for the collision.

And while it would be inaccurate to say that it was the direct cause of the split between team and driver that has been announced eight days later, because the pair have been discussing their future for months, the Monaco incident did effectively finalise a direction of travel that was already set.

Ocon joined the team in 2020 when they were known by the name of parent company Renault.



Esteban Ocon *PHOTO: X@CCHOWK582*

Canadian GP race times, weather

Round nine of the 2024 Formula 1 season heads to Circuit Gilles Villeneuve for the Canadian Grand Prix from 7-9 June. As there is a five-hour time difference between Montreal and the UK, lights out for Sunday's race will be at 19:00 BST. Last time out in Monaco, Charles Leclerc held his nerve to convert pole position at his home race into an emotional victory. *—BBC News*